

## Interview with Paul F. Gardner

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR PAUL F. GARDNER

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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*Q: Today is November 4, 1991. This is an interview with Ambassador Paul F. Gardner on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. I wonder if you would give me a little about your background—where you came from, were educated, etc.?*

GARDNER: I am originally from south Texas. My father was a rancher and we lived in an area which was very sparsely populated. I went to the University of Texas and after serving in the Air Force in the Korean War, I entered the Foreign Service in 1956.

Because I had had a Fulbright for a year in France, my first job was in an intelligence outfit working on France.

*Q: Let's come back a bit. Where did you go to college?*

GARDNER: University of Texas, at Austin, Texas. At that time there was only one of them, now there are several.

*Q: Did you have any feel for foreign affairs at that time?*



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GARDNER: To be frank with you, I was interested when I was in high school in foreign affairs. At that time ...during World War II, in the eighth grade and on. The Rotary Club used to have speakers that came in to talk on world affairs, particularly before television.

*Q: Where was your town?*

GARDNER: It is called Carrizo Springs, about 45 miles from the Mexican border. About 120 miles south of San Antonio.

So I asked one of these speakers about the Foreign Service...what you had to do to get into the Foreign Service. He said, "Well, you have to go to an Ivy League college. You have to have an independent source of income and you have to be good looking." I figured I flunked on all three grounds. So I sort of put it out of my mind.

But by the time I had gotten into the Air Force...I was in intelligence in the Air Force...

*Q: What were you doing in the Air Force?*

GARDNER: I was an intelligence officer in Alaska during the Korean War. I asked to go to Korea, but I was first in the alphabet of my class and went to Alaska. I was working on the Soviet Union and other countries.

At this time the Foreign Service was opening up and they were trying to have more...

*Q: I came in in 1955 when they wanted a massive infusion of main street, I think.*

GARDNER: Right. After the McCarthy problems, etc. So I took the Foreign Service exam and moved in.

*Q: Well, you had had a Fulbright in Paris.*

GARDNER: I was actually in Bordeaux. I studied for a year in Bordeaux.



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*Q: So you came in in 1956.*

GARDNER: October, 1956.

*Q: You had two years in INR, Intelligence Research?*

GARDNER: I had two years in INR. I asked for Africa ...I really wanted to go to the less developed world because I thought there would be more of a chance for a junior officer...and surprisingly enough got Madagascar where we were opening a new post.

*Q: To go back to INR, what types of things were you working on?*

GARDNER: In those days we had probably eight or nine analysts working on France. INR was really heavily staffed and we were on a program which OSI started and which explored everything about most countries. It was to make up for all the lacunae discovered during World War II. I worked on subjects such as how certain parties were operating in France and what their social security system was like. I was a junior officer, of course, so I didn't get to take the very important parties, like the Socialist Party or the Communist Party. I dealt with the fringe parties, especially the right fringe parties, and also social security and that sort of thing.

*Q: So you had the feeling at that time of an encyclopedic approach to... ?*

GARDNER: Yes, certainly an encyclopedic approach involving a lot of people. In retrospect it was a little bit stupid because our stuff really got out of date rather rapidly when you go into that sort of detail. But now, we are perhaps too far on the other side with only one analyst for every country.

*Q: Did you have any feel for the type of people who came into the Foreign Service with you in 1956? Were they more like you, would you say?*



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GARDNER: There was a mixture. I would say that the Ivy League was still preponderant. But there were people from LSU, Kentucky and various other places. So we had more of a mixture with the Ivy League predominant.

*Q: Your first overseas post at Antananarivo, Madagascar...you were in at the beginning weren't you?*

GARDNER: Yes, I helped to open the post there. We had had a post there several years before, but closed it. Madagascar became independent while I was there so our consulate turned into an Embassy.

*Q: What was the situation in Madagascar at the time?*

GARDNER: At the time I arrived there it was still a French colony so I got a little taste of what the colonial experience was like. I lived rather high on the hog, as did the French at that time. Most of our contacts were French because the Malagasy didn't have much of a role. You had a feeling that you were living in some respect in the 19th century with a good number of servants and the most lavish meals I have ever seen...usually seven or eight courses. We ate well. They had fresh oysters all year around because they brought them from France during the season there and later had the local oysters. You could get anything to eat that you could possibly want.

You had the strong feeling that the country was being exploited to some degree. I spent three months previously to that in Nairobi preparing for the post to open because Nairobi was to be our sponsoring post and I was headed to do all the mechanics since this was a two-man post. So I had an experience of British colonialism there and the French in Madagascar. In both cases you saw that the local population lived extremely well...the local French and the local British population...though the British were far more racist, having separate toilets and other facilities for the blacks, which you didn't find in Madagascar. The French were much more likely to intermarry with the local people. In



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both cases you had the feeling of people living rather high on the hog. The Madagascar franc at that time was valued at two French francs. The local saying was that that way they didn't have to change the prices. Everything that was sent out from France was simply doubled in Madagascar.

Things changed very slowly there. As you recall, support for independence came from De Gaulle at that time. He was the one who decided that France should give its colonies their freedom. Madagascar had had a tremendous revolt many years earlier which is not very well known at all, but tens of thousands of people were killed revolting against the French. They were pretty docile when I was there. The principal tribe in the highlands, the Merina tribe, were the ones responsible for this revolution. They were pretty well held down and the radicals were no longer outspoken. You didn't get the feeling that there was very much radical feeling within the country. However, later...the French, of course, sponsored the independence movement there and sponsored the new government. They chose people from other tribes generally to staff the government with the Merina, the principal leaders in the interior of the country, playing a secondary role. So it was quite natural later, I think, that the radical element did come out when the Merina started showing their true colors and the French had more or less divorced themselves from the country. But in my time it was a government set up by the French.

*Q: Was there then Frenchmen sort of buried down in the ministries who served almost like action officers?*

GARDNER: Yes, that was the case everywhere. The French were so-called consultants but you could see that the Malagasy were not in a position to make any of the decisions. So you were to a large degree dealing with the French still after independence.

*Q: How about American interests in the place? Even today in 1991 I don't think Madagascar has caused a blip on the Secretary of State's radar.*



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GARDNER: No. This was one of our problems with the new post. When we started listing the United States' interests, it was very difficult to get a good number. In Madagascar you could only say that they were on a traditional African trading route, etc. and that they had some spices, like vanilla, which were important in the United States. But beyond that there wasn't much US interests at the time. And I guess not now either.

*Q: This was sort of the time of African awakening, were you having to send in telegrams saying "hey think of us too" because you were overlooked?*

GARDNER: Yes. Madagascar is not only divorced from Africa of course by the Mozambique Channel but its people are Asian, not blacks at all. They are very akin to the other country I have served in, Indonesia. Their language is very close to Indonesian. And their culture is what is now called Austronesian, very similar to the culture you find in the Hawaii Islands and the Philippines.

You really couldn't relate them to Asia because they didn't even have myths of coming from Asia, although they quite clearly did. You couldn't relate them to Asian interests in any way because they were too far separated geographically.

At the same time it was difficult to link them with the African continent because not only of the people, but also because the flora and fauna were not what you had in Africa. There were no lions or elephants in Madagascar. Instead they had the lemur which they didn't have on the other side of the Mozambique Channel.

So on the whole it was a very isolated country. The capital, itself, is well up in the mountains from the coastal area. So you had a tremendous sense of isolation from everything. It was at the end of most of the airline routes. If you were coming from Paris you stopped at Nairobi and you stopped at Madagascar. There wasn't any place else to go except occasionally to some of the other islands nearby.



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*Q: Did Soapy Williams come out while you were there?*

GARDNER: No. The only dignitary from the State Department we had was the Under Secretary for Administration who came out. I don't think the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs made it out there while I was there. Congressmen didn't get near us.

*Q: What sort of feeling did this give you of the Foreign Service at that time? Did you want to get into the mainstream of things?*

GARDNER: Yes. Obviously I applied to do something a little more in the mainstream. I think Madagascar was the thing that initiated me into wondering about cultural adaptation to a modern society and different races' approach to it. That has been my private study from then on...how do different countries relate to their own independence and try to have an independent economy.

*Q: At that time where did you see Madagascar going? A thriving country or a marginal one?*

GARDNER: You felt on the whole that it was a viable country because it had certain wealth there. It had only 5 million people on one of the world's largest islands. It had potentially a great deal of agricultural wealth...not mineral wealth. But you felt it was a country that could get along and could support itself. It had very good beef which it exported to France. It had some reasonable fisheries, which again were exported to France. So you had a feeling that it would work.

What I didn't realize was the strong radical feeling that still existed, particularly in the Merina people. It didn't come out at the time I was there. But later on you realized it was just under the surface, that it was bound to come out. It was a strong feeling that the French had held back. A strong residue of hostility created by the strong feeling of



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frustration that they didn't seem to be as good as the French so to speak. The reason they were not as good as the French was because the French had held them back.

This is the sort of thing that I found...virtually all of my career, except in one assignment, in former colonies of the West. I found it in each of the ex-colonial countries to a different degree and perhaps less in Madagascar because of the intermarriage. But, nevertheless, strongly there among one group of people, those who are ruling Madagascar now. They eventually took the radical line, but well after I left.

*Q: You left there in 1961 and went to Laos where you served for two years. What were you doing when you got to Laos?*

GARDNER: I started off as a consular officer but moved to the political section after two or three months. I asked for the political section and they said I could have it. This had something to do with my desire to go to Laos. I actually had asked to go to Paris or Scandinavia, which sounded very good after Madagascar. But the Department felt that I should go to Laos and they promised me a good job as political officer. So I was the junior political officer at the Embassy there.

*Q: You got there just about the time Laos was probably at its peak of interest.*

GARDNER: With the US government, I think so, yes. This was right after the Kong Le coup. There was a security problem there. The Pathet Lao, the local Communist organization, had control of a great deal of the countryside, with the help of the Vietnamese, of course. The Vietnamese were always there in the background.

*Q: These were the North Vietnamese.*

GARDNER: North Vietnamese, yes. So the only thing in the hands of the Royal Lao Government were the towns, you might say. After the Kong Le coup took place...this was a coup of non-Communists against other non-Communists ...life in the cities itself became



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a bit dangerous so we had to go without our families at that time. I was separated from my wife, who had to stay in Bangkok, although within a period of a few months she was able to join me because things had straightened out a bit.

But it was a time when the US role in Laos was quite large and US interest at the White House, in particular, was quite large. What has struck me and what I have retained from Laos I guess after all of these years...there are some graphic events that I have implanted in my mind which quite frankly show that I think I came out of Laos feeling that we were doing the wrong thing and didn't really know what we were doing there on the whole.

*Q: What were these events?*

GARDNER: First, at that time they talked about reviving Laos at the grass roots. Winning the hearts and minds of the people and this sort of thing. All of the officers were supposed to help out on this program. So I went on one trip to a rural area in a province near the Mekong Valley. We went by helicopter to a small town, capital of a county or region. We were to present performances. I was given to show a film on Alaska, the United States newest state. That was my program to the grass roots along with some Mohlam singers. These are traditional Lao singers, a woman and a man, who sing to each other with great humor. They also had an anti-Communist message.

Well, my film was not a hit to say the least since there was no comprehension of snow, seals or anything else that goes with Alaska. The Mohlam team was a hit principally because they were risqu# and off color and made a lot of good jokes. I am not sure the Communist message went so well, but they loved the jokes.

Then we went by foot to another small village nearby and we are having dinner...we had to go after dark, of course, because I was going to show my movie on Alaska...we were having dinner on the porch, I think it was chicken heads, when a very, very frightened Lao soldier came up. They didn't tell me what he told them, but I could see that he was shaking



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all over. I thought, "My gosh he must have had some kind of experience to be shaking all over."

After a while it came out that the Pathet Lao had moved into the vicinity of our area and they were all frightened that they were coming after me. They decided that they would have to cancel the program and I would have to go back at night through this jungle trail to this other village. I had a strong feeling there that I hadn't brought anything to the villagers except fear for themselves because I was there. I don't think that soldier's teeth were chattering because he feared about my safety. But the fact was that he feared that they would come here because of me and his safety was in danger.

So we walked back over a bamboo bridge, which consisted of four or five bamboo poles over a very deep chasm, and I had great difficulty with it because each pole had a different diameter and would give with my weight a little bit differently. Because the Lao weighed almost half what I did, they got across it very easily but I caused a great deal of consternation at first and then later humor. They laughed out loud at me struggling to get across that bridge. I had the feeling that the only thing I brought to them during this whole trip was a little bit of humor, a great deal of fear. I am not sure I should have been out there at all, so to speak.

That night the military shot off mortars continually throughout the night. I knew they couldn't see anything and I knew they didn't have a target. They were simply using shells to make noise to scare the enemy off as traditional Asian armies used to do. It kept me awake all night and used a lot of very expensive mortar shells. So I came back feeling that we were not really getting to the hearts and minds at the grass roots.

Another feeling I recall is an intense interest at the White House and the lackadaisical attitude of the Lao. So it was terribly difficult to get the Lao to do things that the White House, itself, the President himself, wanted. We think of Lyndon Johnson as having hands on control over what went on in Vietnam, but Kennedy was doing the same thing really



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through Averell Harriman in particular. I remember Harriman came out one time to see one of the local leaders Phoumi Nosavan. It was my job to go to his house and try to get an appointment because Harriman gave us 24 hours notice that she was coming. I told them that Harriman wanted to see Phoumi and was told that he was off on a picnic and there was no chance of getting hold of him. I told this to Harriman who simply sends a one liner back...I will see Phoumi. So I went back and said everything had to be done to get this man back to the city. He did show up for the meeting, but I had a feeling...he wasn't even in the government...that we were really pushing people who didn't like being pushed, and that the urgency all seemed to be on our side.

I can also recall during Christmas of 1962, when we were trying to bring the three parties together for a peace agreement...the Communists, the Phoumi government that we were supporting and the neutralists under Souvanna Phouma, who at that time was in Paris. They were holding negotiations and I was on duty all day on Christmas because Washington couldn't wait. There had to be a cable out that night as to what they had accomplished in the negotiations that day.

I had a heck of a time finding the negotiators. They didn't show up at the meeting place. I finally found them in a restaurant, drinking and telling dirty jokes. They had simply decided they didn't want to negotiate that day. They wanted to party instead. This was very difficult, however, to explain to Washington.

It seemed to me in retrospect that it was so silly for this huge world power to try to be pushing a country of less than 3 million people forward when they didn't really know where they were going. We were sort of outlining it for them. I just don't think we played it right in the long run. I think we wasted our resources in an area where we wouldn't have been.

*Q: We did get involved. This wasn't the only place. We felt that whatever we wanted we should get. I have heard almost the same story about Averell Harriman in a major capital*



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*in Europe where he wanted to see the Foreign Minister when he was just an Assistant Secretary. He would not brook being fobbed off onto anyone else.*

GARDNER: Yes, we became very involved in local politics to a large degree by supporting Phoumi. When we found it was wrong, we tried to put it all together with Souvanna Phoumi but I think by that time it was a bit late. I am not saying that we came out in a bad position, but I do feel that we were very, very naive about what you can do with another country just because you are a big power.

*Q: You had two ambassadors while you were there, Winthrop G. Brown and Leonard Unger. How did they feel about what they were doing there?*

GARDNER: Well, I guess you are going to have to ask them. Certainly I didn't speak the way I do now then because I followed my orders and tried to believe in everything I was doing. It was only as I grew older and looked back on it and realized what was sticking in my mind were these images and not the images of any successes at all so to speak. I do know that they were very conscious of what Washington wanted and they wouldn't have been ambassadors there if they hadn't tried to obtain it. I think they both did a good job.

*Q: Did you feel that whatever you were doing there that basically this was a CIA run country insofar as political action, etc.?*

GARDNER: Of course, the CIA was very big there especially among the Meo mountaineers. Their man was our contact with Phoumi. Virtually everything we got from Phoumi was through him. To the sense that they were the channel to Phoumi, and he was the leader of the country they were very important, but I had a feeling that they were following the Ambassador's and Washington's lead. I didn't see them as doing their own thing which was against policy. I saw them following policy.

Now, when our government decided that the Phoumi outfit wouldn't make it and they were going to have to rely on a coalition of the three parties, then, I think, some CIA people



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were put in a very bad position because they were so personally attached to the person they were dealing with such as Phoumi and others, that they, themselves, felt betrayed because Phoumi was being betrayed when we started fooling around with Souvanna Phouma and others with which they did not have contact. So I think there were some CIA agents, if you like, who didn't like the way the policy was going because they had become very, very tied personally to their contacts.

*Q: You left there in 1963 and then what did you do?*

GARDNER: My wife and I both decided that we loved Asia but we would like to be a little further away from the Communists, so I applied for Indonesian language training thinking that I would finally be in a large country. I had been in tiny countries of less than 5 million in population. Indonesian is the easiest of the Asian languages so I applied for that and had ten months of studying Indonesian and then off to Indonesia.

*Q: You arrived there at a very interesting time.*

GARDNER: Yes. During that ten months that I had been studying Indonesian, things really deteriorated and I ran into a society that was very close to Communism. I ran into much the same thing that I had left. Except here the leader, himself, was the one who was leading everybody to the left.

*Q: Sukarno.*

GARDNER: Sukarno, yes.

*Q: When did you get out there?*

GARDNER: I got out there about June 1964.

*Q: What job did you have there?*



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GARDNER: For a few weeks I was, again, in the consular section, although I had been assigned as a political officer. Then I was up in the political section, not the most junior officer this time. I was among the juniors in a rather large political section.

*Q: At that time there was a very well-known controversial ambassador, Howard Jones, who seemed to have his own way of doing things. Could you describe how you felt about Howard Jones and also, maybe, how others in the political section felt about the situation and how we were dealing with it?*

GARDNER: Howard Jones was really a very nice person. But many people there felt that because he was a Christian Scientist he really believed the best of everyone he knew, so to speak. He believed the best of Sukarno. I think Howard Jones felt that Sukarno was becoming more and more anti-American, but it was because of our role in Vietnam which they couldn't stand, and because Malaysian independence came in a way that did not please the Indonesians. In other words, he saw Sukarno's moves towards the left and against us as being caused partly by our policy and by clashes between our foreign policy and Indonesia's. So what we had to explain to the Indonesians was that we really wanted to see them play a big role in the non-aligned world, etc. Jones believed Sukarno, himself, was a nice person who was being pushed this way by the Communists and they were able to drag him that way because of the strong feeling of antagonism toward the US role in Vietnam and Asia. The United States also tried to interfere in Indonesia's internal affairs earlier and there was a strong residue of distrust.

I quite frankly was never told anything officially about what we had done in Indonesia before by my government because it was too secret to pass on to junior officers. But when I got to Indonesia, I found all the Indonesians knew it and were glad to tell me about it.

*Q: They had a pilot didn't they....?*



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GARDNER: They had a pilot of ours who was caught after a bombing raid on Ambon in which a lot of Indonesians were killed. We managed to get him released before I arrived. But we had done a great deal more than that. We had aircraft that were helping the rebels in Sumatra and we had also dropped guns to rebels in Sumatra. I learned about this from an Indonesian general who is now Minister of Defense. When he told me this I was on my second tour in Indonesia and Deputy Chief of Mission. I had a private lunch with him one day. He said, "Did you know, Paul, that in 1958 I was the captain commanding a group in South Sumatra, and in Pakambaru there was a gun drop. We were able to capture these weapons which was designed for the rebels. It was all American equipment." He said that there was also an American major who it turned out had been advising the rebels. He had seen him earlier as an employee of Standard Vacuum in Medan. Then he turned to me and said, "What were you doing during that period?" I said, "I was in Madagascar, my first post." He said, "And what were you doing there?"

He was among the generals who were the most pro-American. In fact he suffered a bit from...having gone to school in the States and being too close to the Americans. But it was quite clear that his suspicion of what we were up to had lingered on into the new order. This was in 1980 that this conversation took place and, of course, the rebellion took place in 1956. So all these suspicions stayed with him.

What I learned is that these so-called covert operations may be covert in the United States but they are not covert there. They are very open and they have a strong residual effect that lasts for decades. And this was the thing that Sukarno used continually. He continually went back to the fact that the Americans supported the Sumatran rebels, and had tried to infiltrate the Indonesian military. This was in many of his speeches.

To get back to Howard Jones, he felt that Sukarno's heart was good. He was being pulled in the wrong direction because of historic factors such as our meddling when we shouldn't



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have been meddling and our role in Vietnam. If we just kept contact with him and tried to explain things to him everything would be all right.

Virtually everyone else in the Embassy felt this wasn't the case at all. Sukarno was using our role, and was using Vietnam, and was using Malaysia for his own internal aims which coincided very closely with those of the Communist Party in Indonesia. Virtually all of us believed this.

I was really taken aback by one experience. As an Indonesian language officer, of course, I had to attend many of the rallies and there was a rally virtually every night. Sukarno would usually speak two or three times a week in one rally or another. This was what he called nation building. Building up the patriotic spirit of the country. I had to go out to the Russian-built stadium and listen to him rant and rave. He was, by the way, a magnificent orator. He held the audience, including me, spellbound.

First, you never knew what he was going to say. He left the UN one evening by just announcing it at one of these rallies. You had to keep your ears tuned very closely because that was where you might get first word of some important decision of one type or another.

But the other factor was that he was just a master of modulating his voice in various ways to hold everybody's attention. When you transcribed his speech later, we recorded these in the Embassy, you would find that it wasn't all that great of a speech. It was more or less his great charisma that carried it across. A lot of it didn't make very much sense. What you did detect was that although he would quote Jefferson occasionally, he had a tendency to quote Communism much more often, and more or less define patriotism in ways that made it very close to what the Communists wanted.

One night I went with the Ambassador as his translator and aide. He didn't often attend these meetings and I forget just what this was, but obviously it was a very important speech or else he wouldn't have been there. The meetings usually started with two or



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three other members of the cabinet speaking first. Usually each of them spoke for about 30 minutes, so you really were trapped in this place for two or three hours listening to speeches.

And before the speeches there were patriotic songs. The biggest one at that time was one that in translation went, "The English we will crush and the Americans we will iron flat." That was the name of the song. You looked across the hall and there were all these banner of Uncle Sam and John Bull being speared by the patriotic Indonesians with their bamboo spears. The Ambassador turned to me while they were singing these songs and said, "They are singing a school song aren't they Paul?" I said, "No sir. They are singing an anti-American, anti-British song." At that time we were worried that the Indonesians might do to us what they had done to the British, which was to burn down their Embassy and all their houses.

*Q: The famous Ash Wednesday.*

GARDNER: Yes. So he said, "Paul, I want you to pass this note to Sukarno." The note said something like, "There are a lot of rumors that the US Embassy and homes are going to be attacked. I wish you would ask that this not be done." I walked over to Sukarno who was still sitting because his time to speak had not come yet. He read the note and turned over and smiled to the Ambassador and nodded his head. When he got up to speak he ranted and raved about the United States and how it had to be crushed. Then, in English, and nodding a little bit to our Ambassador, he said, "Whatever you do I do not want you to harm the Americans." The Ambassador turned to me and said, "See Paul? Sukarno always keeps his promises."

So I had to go back and write a draft cable. I realized it was going to be very difficult to write a cable that he was going to sign. He and I had witnessed a completely different scene. He simply believed so strongly in Sukarno that he couldn't believe that these things were happening. It never occurred to him that Sukarno's asking them not to



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physically harm Americans would still allow them to do exactly what they had done to the British because they hadn't harmed the British physically. They had just burned all their belongings and their Embassy. They could have done the same thing to us.

So there was this problem, a basic problem, and I think the Ambassador felt a little deserted by all the people around him since none of us could really buy his views.

*Q: Of all the embassies at this particular time it seemed to be the ambassadors in one course was a powerful figure in a way, and yet the Embassy and increasingly the State Department were going in a different course.*

GARDNER: Yes. Well, the Ambassador was a very, very nice person and people liked him and he had an entry to Sukarno. A lot of people in Washington felt that all an ambassador really had to do was to have a personal relationship with the head of state and everything would be okay.

*Q: That was very Kennedyish too.*

GARDNER: Yes, that is right.

He had this personal relationship with Sukarno. He could get into see him virtually anytime he wanted to because he was doing what the President wanted him to do which was keeping things relatively quiet while he moved the whole country to the left as far as possible.

*Q: Where was Jones' strength in the Department? Was Harriman a supporter?*

GARDNER: I don't exactly know where his strength was back there. He didn't belong to any clique in Washington that I knew of. He wasn't that type. He wasn't the type to have that sort of ties with anyone.



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*Q: But you did basically have an Embassy which by official-informal or by word of mouth was saying the way they saw it. I mean Washington was not being kept unaware of the fact that Jones was going one course but there were at least professionals in the Embassy who were dubious about this.*

GARDNER: I think they had this view. We had problems getting cables out, quite frankly. This was before there was a dissent channel, so you had to be very careful of what you drafted. You almost had to be like the Indonesians and have people read between the lines to some degree. But, of course, some of the visitors who came out got the picture, because we talked to them.

Ellsworth Bunker was sent by President Johnson to survey the situation. I think the Ambassador wanted to keep him all to himself, so to speak. But I think Bunker may have gotten a feeling for other views at the embassy. How it was accomplished, I was too junior to know. I just read through the cable traffic from that period and it doesn't say either. But I think Frank Galbraith, the DCM, probably got some points across to Bunker. Anyway, rereading the Bunker reports you can see that he saw some of our side. The feeling nevertheless was that we had no choice but to get along with Sukarno.

*Q: After you had been there for about a year you get a new ambassador.*

GARDNER: Yes, Marshall Green. From then on the Ambassador and the Embassy were on the same wavelength. He was obviously on our wavelength in Washington when he was Deputy Assistant Secretary. He wasn't covering Indonesia in that position but he saw all the traffic and everything else. It was quite clear that we had a different type of leader. He was very anxious to hear all of our views and seemed to listen to them. I think he played things right.

*Q: Well, were you in your role as political officer beginning to see more and more the buildup to the takeover of the Communists in support of Sukarno?*



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GARDNER: It was quite clear what was happening. I think Bob Martens helped a lot of us understand what was happening because he had been in Moscow. Mary Trent was also there and she had been in Czechoslovakia before it fell. Many of us felt that Howard Jones had brought Mary Trent out because she, too, was a Christian Scientist and they had worked together before and that he needed somebody on his side. Mary had not been there two weeks and she said, "This place is just like Czechoslovakia when it was going Communist."

*Q: What was she doing?*

GARDNER: She was deputy chief of the political section. Then Bob Martens pointed out that Sukarno and the Communists were using salami tactics which were quite obvious. Each month or so you would have a different group banned by Sukarno. And every time it was a anti-Communist group. So it was quite clear to all of us that it was moving close to Communism.

The only comfort we took out of this was that the place was in such horrible condition...unbelievable economic situation...that the Communists would get probably the most difficult country to run on earth at that stage. The price structure was all out of whack. It cost more to buy a quart of water than a gallon of gasoline. This type of thing. The black market price of just everything was out of hand. You took four hours to drive the 28 miles to Bogor because the roads were in such bad condition. They had an inflation rate which I think was the highest in the world at that time...some Latin American countries have now outdone them. I think it was going something like 1500 percent a year. And nothing was working. Everything was going down hill. You did have the comfortable feeling that when they got Indonesia they were going to get a country that was just an economic disaster. But that was the only comfort there was. We had no feeling of any forces on the other side, quite frankly. The military seemed paralyzed. Part of their paralysis was that Sukarno was telling them that anything they did that was against his policies in Malaysia just lined them up with the neo-colonists imperialists...meaning us. Nasution had been in the



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United States and most of the other generals, not Suharto, but the others, had been in the United States and Sukarno was using this to push them aside. They were the only really anti-Communist group still around. They had banned the Moslem group that was anti-Communist and had only sycophants left on the Moslem side. The Nationalist organization had become completely pro-Communist. So the only thing left was the army that was anti-Communist and they were almost paralyzed by Sukarno with his charisma, which was fantastic, defining patriotism in such a manner that the army leadership appeared less and less patriotic. They weren't pursuing Malaysian confrontation in the field as Sukarno wanted because they knew it wasn't right. They really didn't want to get involved in a war. They weren't bringing Communists into the military and having political commissars in the military as Sukarno also wanted. It appeared to us that eventually they were going to cave in too because they seemed to be paralyzed.

I was quite frankly extremely pessimistic. There were no voices on the other side. Very few people would talk to us at all. The only people we did see were those who were already out of things, particularly the ones who had signed the Cultural Manifesto, which was an effort to obtain freedom of speech and artistic expression. Sukarno considered that terribly unpatriotic because all art should in his view support the revolution. The Sukarnoists were mimicking Soviet art, which doesn't go with their culture at all. All their statues at that time were heroic figures with great muscles, etc. breaking chains. This is not Indonesian at all. Their traditional heroes were all very slender people from the Ramayana and Mahabharata, not great muscled brutes. But it was Sukarno's type of hero because he sent his artists to Moscow and that is what they came back with. It was all dissonant with the local culture in my point of view. And yet it had apparently taken hold.

There was no one standing up to him. He would just fire people and that was that. They just seemed to disappear into the background. The people whom we had contact with would always come after dark to make sure no one would see them. When you were having supper you got very, very used to having the boy come in and say, "There is a guest at the door." And you knew that somebody wanted to take a peek at Time magazine



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which was banned or some American newspapers to see what the outside world was doing. Or, perhaps, it was just to borrow a book of fiction. There were no real books on the shelves of Indonesia at that time.

So my contacts were really young people, many of whom had studied in the United States or in Western Europe and were considered untrustworthy and didn't have jobs. Even they would come after dark.

You had a feeling with a society like this that there was no force on the other side. And we were fooled because there was a strong resentment to what was going on, but it just couldn't be expressed. And Sukarno was fooled. He hadn't allowed any negative feedback at all, so he didn't realize, I am quite sure, the strength of anti-Communist feeling in Indonesia at that time. It only needed an outlet which the events of October 1, 1965 eventually provided.

*Q: Well, what did you do during that period? This was when the generals were slain and the army came back.*

GARDNER: Well, we were taken by surprise. I lived only about three houses away from the chief of staff of the army, General Yani, who had been killed during the night in his house. I didn't hear anything. I had air conditioning, of course. I got up and went to the office the next day. I always read the newspaper in the back seat while the driver drove. Why a junior officer had a chauffeur needs an explanation, I guess. It was an economic necessity because if you left your car unguarded for 15 minutes you lost your windshield wipers and you couldn't get windshield wipers in Indonesia. You had to order them from the States which meant that during the rainy season you couldn't use your car. If you left your car unguarded for 30 minutes you lost your engine. Because the currency had been so debased, it cost us only about \$20 a month to have a chauffeur. And \$20 a month would pay for the windshield wipers alone. Plus it gave you someone to talk Indonesian to since few Indonesians would speak to you. We had a feeling that many of them were



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probably employed by the Deputy Prime Minister, who had his own intelligence operation, so we had to be careful what we said. But at least they would speak Indonesian to us.

On the way to the office that morning I noticed that the road was blocked and the chauffeur had taken another road. Normally we would go right in front of Nasution's house and we didn't. When we got to the square where our Embassy was...a large square called Freedom's Square...I saw that there were soldiers all around. So I turned to my chauffeur and said, "What are they doing here?" He said, "Well, I think they are practicing for Armed Forces Day." I believe Armed Forces Day was October 15.

The Ambassador, Marshall Green, hadn't been there very long and we discovered that he got to the office very, very early. He quite often was the only person there at 7 o'clock. So we would try to get there early. That morning I was pleased to arrive just as he did. As I was walking up the steps he turned to me and said, "Paul, what are all those troops doing out there in the square?" I said, "Well, sir, I think they are practicing for Armed Forces Day." I was very pleased with myself for here was the new Ambassador who had recognized me and knew my name. He had asked me my assessment of the situation and I had come forward and reassured him very promptly.

As I went upstairs and listened to the 7:30 news. I learned a revolutionary council had taken over. So I was hoping like the dickens that he would forget my name and what I told him. He has never mentioned it to this day so I am certain that by the time he got into the Embassy he had queried several other people and put my views aside.

The soldiers on the square obviously were not friendly because the radio announced a revolutionary council had taken over to protect the President and the nation from the CIA and others.

We were all flabbergasted. We simply did not know what was happening. We took tours around town and nothing had changed in the town. The soldiers didn't seem all that hostile to us. We learned later that most of them didn't know what they were doing there. The



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leaders knew, but they didn't. We could move all around town. We didn't know where the President was. There was no mention of him anywhere. Then we started getting reports through the military channels of who had been killed in the early morning. By the evening we were well aware that most of the top army leaders had been killed but Nasution had escaped. We didn't know where he was.

It took four days for Sukarno to surface. We found out that he had actually been at the airport where the scheming had taken place. Looking back on it, CIA found some reports that did show that the air force had been training communist cadre out at the airport, but this was the only indication that something was up and the reports didn't say what the cadre were being trained to do. Obviously this had been a very closely held operation, so closely held that the military, itself, didn't know. They killed the head of the military intelligence, along with the others. Those top people had no hint of what was happening and neither did we. Obviously we were very pleased to have Suharto take over, although we didn't know him at all.

*Q: Your first impression was that the army's been beheaded and...?*

GARDNER: Yes, this was our first impression that the army was being beheaded, but we didn't know by whom although we knew that it apparently was a Communist outfit. The radio listed the names of their revolutionary committee, including non-communist military leaders from the outer islands...obviously trying to get support from the outer islanders who didn't know what was going on. These non-communist revolutionary committee members were a screen to make the operation appear broadly based. But when people were contacted they had no knowledge of this organization at all.

We weren't sure what military forces were left, but it looked very bad. We weren't even sure which side Sukarno was on because the revolutionary committee dismissed the cabinet and set up their own rule. This would seem to be against Sukarno. There are still a lot of unanswered questions on the whole thing and they probably never will be completely



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answered. Why did Colonel Untung's group dismiss the cabinet? Why didn't they come out in support of Sukarno right away and leave the cabinet the way it was? I don't know the answer. Certainly the Communist's goal was to emasculate the military and not to change the government.

*Q: PKI was the Communist Party?*

GARDNER: Yes. It did not wish to openly take power, it wanted a screen in front of it at this stage. But it wished to do away with military leaders who were prohibiting it from infiltrating the army. Those military leaders were the only things left between the Communists and power because they knew Sukarno was on their side.

*Q: The Embassy most of this time was basically keeping its head down?*

GARDNER: Oh yes. Keeping our head down and reporting. We were able to move around town because, as I say, those troops didn't try to keep check on us. Of course they only had control of the city for a day.

*Q: These were the Sukarno...?*

GARDNER: The battalions in question were actually headed by Communists, but the membership was not Communist. So they were just following their leader. Then when Suharto went out and talked to them and told them what they were doing he got them to leave. So Suharto took the town with very little firing. When they took the radio station, which was down the street from us, we heard some firing there, but there was very little bloodshed by Suharto's forces. They simply showed the other side that they had a preponderance of force. They did not attack Halim air base, but made it very, very clear that they had the power to take whatever they wanted, so that pro-communists at Halim surrendered. This is the way that Suharto has always acted. He amasses his force in a manner to allow him to avoid bloodshed. This is an old southeast Asian strategy which dates back to the period when people were much more important than terrain.



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*Q: As this went on...I have interviewed Bob Martens who was the number three in the political section and the expert on the Communist operations...In the last year or so there have been sort of accusations that when the counter-coup, or whatever you want to call it, took place that we were supplying lists of people to be taken care of by...*

GARDNER: I had no knowledge of this. I didn't even know that Bob had passed over some of his cards to his contact there. Maybe he had mentioned it, but I didn't know that at all. If he did, I wouldn't have thought that it would have been terribly important. I think Bob believes that the military didn't have any knowledge of the Communist Party and I can't agree with him on that. I think they knew a heck of a lot more than we did. And when they started rounding up communists, they had lists and these lists didn't come from Bob Martens. This was quite clear, because this occurred before Bob Martens passed his first list there.

I have gone back to records since that time to look at this particular problem...the only lists that he passed to them were of the top communist party leadership saying where they were at the time. The confidential sources were excised before he passed the lists on. These sources, however, were principally from the army itself.

*Q: So the army already had it.*

GARDNER: His classified sources were military to a large degree and the other source was the PKI newspaper. So I just disagree with Bob. Most of us who were there then do, actually, including Marshall Green...that anything he gave to the Indonesians was not already known by them. But he didn't give this information directly to the military. He gave it to an aide of Adam Malik, who is Chinese. And Adam Malik, who was not then really close to the military at all...I don't think that list went anywhere, quite frankly. I think it was helpful to the guy who gave it to him who was trying to become more of a political expert to Malik. In fact he handled Malik's personal financial affairs, he was Chinese. But he was also trying to enlarge his political role. So it was helpful for him to be a conduit and



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it was helpful to us to have somebody who told us how Malik felt, and this sort of thing. Malik later had a reasonably close relationship with the military, but at that time he did not. Principally because he was a leader of the former Murba Party and the army didn't like the old Murba Party. So, I just don't think that that list went beyond Malik's office. His source said openly that he gave it to Malik, but he doesn't know what Malik did with it. I don't see Malik, rushing to the military saying, "Here is a list of the Communist leadership that I got from the American Embassy ." I can't see that.

*Q: I might, just for the record, add here, we are talking about Bob Martens, who was in the political section and had this list which he had been maintaining as every political officer does and it was handed over. This has been used in some of the press in the United States, some 20 years later or more to say that we are responsible for a death list that went out to the Indonesian army to kill Communists. This has become a little...*

GARDNER: Yes. Of course, we did have indirect contact with the military through an aide of Nasution. One of Nasution's aides was in contact with our military attach# at that time. But Nasution, himself, did not receive the Ambassador. The Ambassador never paid a call on him or anything. That would have harmed him with Sukarno. The military was very wary of any relationship with us because it would give the Communists ammunition to use against them. And Nasution told us as much. The last American to speak directly to Nasution at any great depth was George Benson, who was head of our military aid group there. He had helped most of these military men go to the United States for courses. He has a great personality and got along well with the Indonesians and had made a lot of good friendships there. Nasution's message to George as he was leaving...George left around April 1965...was to tell the Americans to lie low, "we will take care of this in our own Indonesian way" and to leave us alone. This is more or less what he said, and that is what we did.

We did have this contact with Nasution's aide occasionally. So if we, at the Embassy, had wanted to pass any lists of Communists or anything like that, we would have done it



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through that guy directly to the military. But we didn't, and they didn't want anything like that from us; they made that quite clear. This was Bob doing something on his own from his card file. We all had ways of getting our contacts. And since we had very few contacts, we all tried to get a few.

*Q: Well, Suharto was really an unknown, was he?*

GARDNER: Yes, he was. He was one of the few generals who did not speak English. He had served virtually all of his time outside of Jakarta and simply was unknown to us. Of course we knew the position he filled and we knew a little bit about his history and this sort of thing, but no one had ever talked to him or anything like that.

*Q: On all these events, did you have any feel for what our involvement in Vietnam...was there any reflection of that?*

GARDNER: Well, our involvement in Vietnam was something, as I mentioned earlier, that Sukarno used against us. He warned his own people that we were trying to do the same thing in Indonesia, that we were trying to run affairs in Indonesia just like we were running them in South Vietnam.

I think Sukarno definitely believed that history was on Communism's side. He saw what was happening in Vietnam and believed that the historical tide was in communism's favor. He spoke of the Jakarta, Phnom Penh, Hanoi, Pyongyang, Peking Axis, as he called it. He aligned himself with those countries because he believed the tide was all in their direction. He had a strong feeling that we would be defeated in Vietnam and that our efforts there was a colonialist thing that he could use against us.

Now, did the steps that the United States took in Vietnam embolden the Indonesian military? I had General Westmoreland, a visitor in Papua New Guinea and he asked this question himself. I think he wanted very much to believe that we were in part responsible for what happened in Indonesia because of the stand we took in Vietnam. This could be



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true, but I figure that was a marginal factor at most. The Communists made it a life or death situation for the military. They had to do what they did. So I don't think the fact that we might be a valuable ally was a factor or consideration. They had to do something to protect their own lives, so to speak, and that is what they did.

Some say, on the contrary that we were so busy in trying to run the war in Vietnam that we didn't focus on Indonesia. And that was perhaps a favorable factor for the Indonesia military.

*Q: You didn't have any pressure from Washington to...?*

GARDNER: At that time, 1965, things were so engrossing in Vietnam that they weren't able to pick up on anything else, except from the point of view of publicizing events there. I don't think anyone wanted to put their hand into Indonesia and Green certainly was not encouraged to do so.

*Q: I take it you didn't have the press descend on you?*

GARDNER: No. We had some reporters, not in big numbers...but some very good ones. The New York Times sent a permanent reporter down there, Al Friendly. We had some good people there who hadn't been there before, who obviously came to record the events after October 1. We had all the principal news organizations represented there. But nothing like Vietnam.

And again, we were not allowed to travel in the countryside and neither were correspondents to a large degree. This was a legacy from the Sukarno period. We were simply not allowed as diplomats to travel much. We even were supposed to request permission to go to our constituent posts, but we didn't pay much attention to that rule. We were not able to go out into the countryside. We were very suspect at the time and the local people may very well turn you in because they believed you were an enemy and spying on something. This was the mentality then.



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There was still some of that around later. When I went back to a rural area in Sumatra and was looking around...1978, I think it was...I had some local people come up to me and say, "You are an American, what are you doing here?" I had obviously strayed close to some military encampment or something. So suspicion of the United States was still around. We were very much handicapped. We couldn't move beyond the major cities without being turned in.

*Q: Did you have any feel or contact with the Soviets during this period? They must have had a large mission there.*

GARDNER: Yes, they were in a quandary. They realized that the Indonesian Communists were behind the October 1 event. This is why I get a little bit upset with Cornell University, which is still pushing this line that the Communists had nothing to do with those events, that it was an internal army affair. All the Communist embassies knew what had happened and they didn't try to hide it. They knew that the PKI was in this. You can say that the PKI was principally in the Chinese camp and not in the Soviet camp. That is true to some extent, but the Soviets were a big source of arms. They were the ones who had a huge aid program.

So the Soviets were in a quandary. They didn't want to try to protect the PKI because they knew it was guilty, and it was also connected to China. They may have believed like the Indonesians that China had a hand in it as well. And yet they didn't want to see the Communist Party obliterated because they had no other friends. We didn't have much contact with them but the ones we did see admitted openly that the PKI was involved in the October 1 affair.

*Q: Is there a school of thought that says the PKI wasn't?*

GARDNER: Well, Cornell University put that out quite early after the coup. Some of their Indonesian experts published something, and I think a lot of them are still sticking by it.



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Their line is very, very close to the Indonesian Communist Party line which appeared in the newspapers the day after the coup. The morning of October 1 the Communist newspapers came out with the story that it was an internal army affair although they supported the coup.

Since it had happened at 4 o'clock in the morning and the newspapers went to press about 8 o'clock, it is obvious that they knew what was coming. But that line was also taken by some Cornell people and made us at the Embassy very, very unhappy, very angry because Cornell was known as the center of Indonesian studies in the United States and there was a strong feeling among the non-communist Indonesians that maybe the United States was not aware of what happened.

This was a continuing festering point between us Indonesian experts in the Department and the Indonesian experts at Cornell University, who were looking at things from a few thousand miles away.

*Q: What did you do after the coup? You were a political officer and were there for three more years.*

GARDNER: We were very busy reporting on what was happening because society was coming apart at first and then was eventually put back together again by Suharto and the army. So we had a tremendous amount of reporting to do. And, of course, as we moved further and further from October 1, more and more Indonesians would speak to us. And suddenly we found those people who were completely out of things in the old days, because they had the Western training that was needed by the government, came to the forefront. So many of the friends that I first knew as poor, impoverished students, are now extremely prominent in Indonesian society. There has been a complete turn about.

What puzzled us so much was how many people took to the streets, tens of thousands of people took to the streets against the Communists. We had never seen this sort of thing, nor had Sukarno, of course. We didn't know the strength of resentment to the



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Communists. It was very deep and very widely spread within the society. We had no hint of it because Sukarno didn't let these hints come forward. And I think Sukarno, himself, had no hint of it because he had such control over the society and didn't let any other voices speak, that he believed that he had a monolithic society that was all behind the revolution. Instead you had a very, very strong feeling among some of the most talented people in the country against the way the country was going.

*Q: What was the Communist Party of Indonesia doing to cause this resentment to cause mass uprising?*

GARDNER: There were a number of things. A lot of these people had lost their job. A lot of people feared what would happen to them if the Communists took over. This did seem to prove that the Communists would use force to take over. The other factor was particularly with the Islamic sector. The Communists had started a takeover process, a people's power so to speak. They decided to take land reform into their own hands. They were moving against landowners and occupying property.

Well, Indonesia, unlike the Philippines and a good many other southeast Asian countries, has no large landowners ...very few people owned over two hectares. So what they were doing was taking over...well, first government land. In some cases land that had belonged to forestry or rubber plantations and land that belonged to small farmers. A great number of these was Muslims. A strong hatred grew up between the Islamic society and the Communists, who seemed to be robbing them of their patrimony, their heritage in land. This became so strong that there were clashes around the country.

Henry Heymann, who was our consul in Surabaya reported before the coup and about a clash between the PKI and the Moslems, I think over some government appointments. He said the clashes seemed to indicate that the Indonesians who say there may be a civil war at some stage in this country, may be right. Henry had foresight. What happened was exactly that. The Moslems turned against the Communists and killed



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them in great numbers. Since the Moslem leaders who existed at that time seemed to be pro-Communist, you didn't have a strong feeling of what was going in the grass roots. We couldn't go to the grass roots and they couldn't speak to us Americans without endangering their lives. So you had to do more mind reading than we were capable of.

I think it surprised them too. I think when they started out in the streets they had no feeling that there would be so many people there. They were not allowed to meet each other. There was fear of Subandrio's intelligence organization which was reporting on everybody. All the anti-Communists had been weeded out of the faculties of the universities. So there was a great deal of fear.

*Q: You are pointing out one of the things that gets lost sight of and that is that here is an Embassy supposedly keeping a pulse on a country and yet it is very difficult because...if Sukarno didn't understand what was happening, nor the military...unless the Embassy is engaging in crystal ball gazing, it certainly isn't going to be as good as the normal intelligence service.*

GARDNER: We did have some insights on how to read some things because they were writing between the lines. We all learned how to do this, so we knew which forces were anti-Communist. But we also saw them being taken out one by one by Sukarno, because Sukarno had all the power. Each time he fired a group or abolished their organization, then all the people in it were intimidated.

I handled Moslems so I had some sources within the Moslem student organization which was always opposing the PKI student organization at rallies. These patriotic rallies that Sukarno had sometimes seemed like a football game. First they would all start with singing and yells and slogans over and over again. Secondly, there were often two different groups. A pro-Communist group and a much, much smaller group of the Moslem university association yelling against them.



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At one stage the Moslem group was threatened with abolishment. I had become friendly with one of the leaders of this organization by teaching him English in the teacher's college there before they fired me for being a possible imperialist agent. I did it free of charge, needless to say, in my free time. He came to tell me that it was very difficult for them to have any association with us because they would be abolished.

They hadn't had any anti-American demonstrations. So they mounted an anti-American demonstration at the Residence. They were very nasty to Ambassador Howard Jones. They were a little bit violent, forcing themselves into the house, etc. We didn't know who had backed this demonstration at the time, but it was my suspicion that it was this organization. He came to me at night and said that they had to do it because they were about to be abolished and had to show that they were as patriotic as anybody else. And the way to show you were patriotic was to have a demonstration against the American Embassy.

*Q: So were you beginning to get to a position where the political section could begin to talk to people within the government and do the things that you normally would do...not only reporting on a situation but also explaining American policy, going after UN votes and this sort of thing?*

GARDNER: Yes, slowly. We couldn't go up for UN votes because Subandrio remained as Foreign Minister for a year afterwards and that guy was obviously pro-Communist.

*Q: Why did he last so long?*

GARDNER: He lasted so long because Sukarno wanted him there and because the army did not want to get rid of Sukarno because of his great charisma and he was the father of the country. They didn't want to cause chaos in the country. They waited for Sukarno to draw the noose around his own neck. It took over a year for Sukarno to do this ...to show his colors, for the people to get out, for the students to show what way they wanted to go.



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The students began demonstrating against Sukarno in great numbers. So it was Suharto's way of avoiding a civil war basically.

So during this period Sukarno was still President. He was still in charge of the cabinet but the army would ever so often say, "This is it, we won't have that anymore." He would say, "Okay." And then he would go backward again and appoint some other people to the cabinet who were pro-Communist. He was protecting people at his palace.

So it was going back and forth like a boxing match, shadow play, if you like. We were watching it and weren't absolutely sure that the military was going to win, that Sukarno wouldn't reassert himself in some way at some time. But as things went on and on we realized that the military did have the upper hand and that Sukarno would have to give in eventually, which he did. But in the meantime you had a period of dualism in government, which meant that things were very much up in the air. Some of the military commanders in the field were still pro-Sukarno, in particular Aidit in Bandung which was one of the biggest headquarters. In central Java where you had one of the biggest populations several of the military commanders were Communists. And in east Java as well, there seemed to be some pro-communist units. So the military, itself, had several people in their own ranks they weren't certain of.

Suharto has always followed the strategy of not pushing people to the wire, but rather of building your forces so large that the other side sees them and caves in. You don't need to attack. This is the way he played. Unfortunately this allowed chaos out in the countryside and there were loads of killings by the Moslems. There had before been some killing by the PKI, some assassinations of Moslem teachers in east Java, for example, and the Moslems got even with a vengeance and started killing people like mad.

In many instances I think they were aided by the military. There is no doubt that they were given arms by the military, because the Communists had armed their people as well. One of the big Communist campaigns at that time was a fifth armed force, which would be the



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people. They wanted to arm all the people. Well, this meant to the army that they were going to arm the Communist Party. They knew there were arms caches throughout the country. I think they overestimated the arms caches but there were several thousand arms in the country that the Communists had shipped in under the guise of building material for the great new complex that Sukarno was building for his replacement for the UN, come April, the Congress of newly emerging forces. We had intelligence of that. We knew that was happening. And they discovered on the night of October 1 that they had distributed weapons to the Communist youth groups and labor groups at Halim. The Communist Party was the largest party in the country at that time so if they armed their whole membership there would have been a war of certain dimensions. They did not though. It surprised us that the Communists were as weak as they were...pretending to be so strong, but actually most of their people were traditionalists ...you see there were what we call the Abangan people of Java, which means they were not Moslems, and tended to be more passive, to bend with the wind and that sort of thing.

In the first bloodshed after October 1 in central and east Java, the Communists came out ahead. But as these clashes built up and the military started arming the Islamic groups it went the other way and finally evolved into true massacres of communists. None of which we witnessed. I never talked to anyone who had firsthand knowledge of these killings. But I have talked to people who said they had someone working for them in the office who disappeared. We had sources that reported a lot of people were killed but they didn't see the actual killing. Most of the killing occurred at night. They would go into a village and kill, a lot of the killings seemed to concern grudges and had nothing to do with the political situation. It was one village against another to a large degree.

In Bali there were many indications that it was large family groups against other family groups who happened to be lined up on the Communist Party on one side and the Nationalist Party on the other. There were no Moslems in Bali, it was Hindu. But the killings in Bali were just as brutal as any place else, and perhaps a bit more. In Bali it was kinship wars and some class wars too. In east Java it was quite often an Abangan



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village against an Islamic village. They could get back at them now. At the people who were trying to get some of their land. They would quite often kill all the men in the village. We did travel to some villages much later and found that there were no men there. That didn't mean absolutely that they were killed because they could have fled, as many did, and come back later.

We never really got a hold on how many were killed and we said over and over again that it was something that we couldn't estimate. We kept hearing all these reports and Indonesians were very likely to exaggerate. They exaggerated this kind of thing and they got built up larger than they were. Nevertheless you had a large number—I think Marshall Green used a figure of 250,000 at some stage. He now believes it was somewhat less than that. It was very hard to tell because you didn't know what the population was to start with. So even if you had a census taken, you didn't know what the prior census was because they hadn't had any in a long time. So it is hard to judge.

All I know is that no American in the Embassy ever saw a body and I think very few ever talked to people who had. Some sources bragged that they had been in killing groups. I am not sure whether I believe them or not, quite frankly. Nobody I talked to had ever witnessed a killing. Most of the killings were in the rural areas, not in the cities. There were some at the beginning in the cities. Where the army had word about these arms cache, they would go through the highly populated little villages (Kampongs) within the city and find the arms and kill off a few people. This was done quite often at night when people would be caught at home. There was a curfew. But I never realized that was going on in the city. I never saw it. All I saw was our intelligence reports afterwards, reports that somebody else said they had done this.

Not to my knowledge did any CIA person see any killings. They definitely talked to people who said that they witnessed these killings and may have participated in them. How often you believe that, I don't know, because some people like to brag.



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*Q: Yes, I know, particularly with the thought that that would be something that we would like.*

GARDNER: Yes, and some of these people were going to ask for support, which we didn't give. In fact we were a little put off by some of this stuff. Some of the stories were very gruesome.

Now, we were not trying to say that we were standing off...we actually wanted the anti-Communists to win obviously because even our safety was dependent on that. We knew that we were the devils as far as the Communists went. They had told us this many, many times. So obviously our sentiments were with the non-Communists. But we were repulsed by some of the tactics they took, because I don't think the people they killed were actually Communists.

I was even more repulsed—over ten years later when I went back first as political counselor and then as DCM. The government, under pressure from the Carter administration began to release the Communists from the prisons. I attended these ceremonies. You found so many people who had spent eleven and twelve years in prison, who could have only been 12 or 13 when they were sent there. They were usually members of youth organizations at Halim and were believed to have been implicated in the killing of the generals because they were massed where the generals were. I just can't believe this happened. I saw a young lady who spent her entire life from 12 to 22 in a prison. I don't think that person was ever a real Communist. At 12 years old you are not a Communist, you just join youth group because somebody recruits you. Because she was there with the PKI they immediately put her in jail.

There were many, many cases like that among some 60 or more thousand of PKI who were in jail and released afterwards. I was a language officer and this was of interest to us. We were trying to get their release at that time. I went to four or five ceremonies in various cities. Some obviously went in as dyed-in-the-wool Communists and came out dyed-in-



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the-wool Communists. But some went in innocent and came out probably as Communists, because that was who they were living with.

I often wonder what happened to that woman, the one who went in as a child and came out a woman, whether she made it on the outside. I would like to go back and find out, but you can't do that. Americans can't insert themselves in a society like that because it hurts the people you are attempting to observe.

*Q: To mix in. This, of course, is one of the great, as you mention, the cultural things that our natural interests and concerns can have very detrimental affects.*

GARDNER: Yes, it can because we were people who had a certain image in that country and any situation we walked into to see what was going on would change by our presence. So therefore what we saw going on would not be what was really going on. So the best you can do is try to get second accounts from people who have been in these situations and can talk to you about them without inserting yourself directly into it.

We were lucky in a later period because the anti-Communist people, obviously a lot of them were students who had been fired and were out of jobs and would visit us after dark, became sort of heroes of the anti-Sukarno movement. And also because they were so intelligent and had so much gumption to put themselves on the wrong side—the side against the wind at that time.

One student came to me, he had been the one who had signed the Cultural Manifesto. He was at graduate level. He couldn't get a job, couldn't get into the university, couldn't do anything because he signed the Manifesto. He got a scholarship to Belgium and came to me to ask me to loan him \$50 so that he could buy a suit because it would be winter in Belgium. I was very pleased that he was getting out of the country because I recognized him as a very, very intelligent and modest young man. I gave him the \$50 and thought that I probably would never see him again. He wouldn't dare to come back to Indonesia.



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I had another friend who was also fired from his job. He was teaching agriculture. He would come over in the night. I had wondered what had happened to him because he couldn't get out of the country.

Another young man who had been an AFS (American Field Service) student in Buffalo, I met in Sulawesi. He was my guide when I visited there. That was during the Sukarno period. He told me afterwards that he didn't realize he was also supposed to spy on me while he was showing me around. I said that I knew he was. He said they asked him for a full report of who I saw and what I said. He showed up later and he wanted me to help him. He was very, very poor. The family that he had stayed with in the United States had sent him a check but he would be immediately branded if he tried to cash an American check in Indonesia. He asked me if I would mind receiving the check and giving him the rupiah. I did and I think they sent his letter to me through the APO. I cashed the check and gave him \$10 in Indonesian currency, which was quite a lot in those days. As I said I was paying \$20 for a chauffeur for a month. A lot of students lived off of \$10 a month. Since there were no books anywhere, he got a hold of a mimeograph machine and mimeographed books which he sold. That was how he worked his way through college. Later on he went back to Buffalo and got his Masters.

After this all turned around, and I came back, ten years later, I found these people still there. The little guy who had gone to Belgium was back and had become the editor of their leading magazine. He used to come at night and asked to look at Time magazine and their magazine was designed after Time magazine, Tempo. He is now the editor-in-chief and a luminary in the country. One of the top writers.

The agricultural guy had become one of the principal poets of the anti-Sukarno movement. He got a lot of publicity for his poetry and became head of the Fine Arts Institute and gave up the agriculture. He is now with Shell Oil.



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The other little guy who went to Buffalo has remained a good friend all these years. He was then director of Union Carbide Company there and is now president of two companies and the first Indonesian manager to make over a billion rupiah a year, which is our currency is \$880,000 a year, from one of his jobs. He has another job which means he is making over a million dollars a year. So he is the highest paid non-Chinese Indonesian businessman in Indonesia.

So all of these young people who seemed to have no hope whatsoever and who I grieved over—what was going to happen to these people—turned out well.

The student who came and told me about the “patriotic” demonstration of his Moslem organization mounted at the Embassy residence—when I came back I found him running an English language course on television.

*Q: Why don't we stop here before you leave Indonesia and we will pick it up another time.*

*Q: Today is November 25, 1991. This is a continuing interview with Ambassador Paul Gardner. You had left Indonesia and served for two years in Personnel.*

GARDNER: Actually it wasn't two year, it was only about six months. Marshall Green, who was Ambassador when I was in Indonesia, came back as Assistant Secretary, and he moved me to the Indonesian Desk, so I became the deputy of the Indonesian Country Directorate after six months in Personnel. So I spent the rest of the time on Indonesia again, but from the Washington angle.

*Q: For somebody who is not familiar with how the Foreign Service works, could you give a feel about coming from a post, which was obviously high profile at that time, and going to Washington? Was there really a different perspective or not?*

GARDNER: Oh yes, the perspective is really as different as night and day. There is a reversed cultural shock when you come back to your own bureaucracy and have to work



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where you are really much less a person then you were overseas, especially at the rank I was at that time. Although it affected all ranks. I had an ambassador once who said that in Washington everyone is somebody's lackey, so to speak.

The Department was a very impersonal place to work. I never really enjoyed working there, quite frankly. I wasn't all that pleased to go back, but it was time to do so, so it was just as well.

*Q: What were the main concerns with Indonesia during this period, 1968-71?*

GARDNER: This was when the new regime had just come in. We had to really determine our relationship to the Suharto regime. We had approached it extremely carefully. I may have mentioned earlier that we started off with a very small program of assistance and gave them no military assistance. Although, we had given them defense military assistance earlier in the Sukarno regime, that was broken off at the time of confrontation with Malaysia. We did not resume that type of relationship. We kept the low profile policy that Marshall Green is famous for installing in Indonesia. We had a very small program of civic action. At this time the Nixon administration had come in and Kissinger was sitting in the NSC. They had a much more active policy towards a number of countries, Cambodia being one of them. But also, I believe, they obviously wanted to take another look at Indonesia as well, as it was the largest country by far in Southeast Asia, and a country where all these dramatic changes had occurred.

Part of my first job was to draft a national security decision document on what we should do in Indonesia. I think there was a lot of feeling from the more activist people that we should take a more active role and support the government. Go fully in. Some of us who knew Indonesia felt this was not the proper role because of our history there and because of the need not to brand them as an American friend. And also to keep them on the track which they were on, which was really a very rational economic recovery program installed



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by the IMF, the World Bank, and their technocrats together. We helped this as well with our aid program.

It demanded a great amount of sacrifice and discipline on the part of the Indonesians, which they were able to do simply because they had an authoritarian regime. We, as a democratic country, tend to look down on authoritarian regimes as something that is not quite developed. However, authoritarianism is deeply embedded in the Asian culture, whether it is Confucianism as you find in Vietnam and China, or whether it is a type of Hinduized cultural base as you find in Indonesia. In Thailand and Cambodia, their traditions are very much paternalistic, authoritarian type of culture.

So Indonesia continued in an authoritarian culture which it had left only for about four years and some very catastrophic years, their democratic period, with the results we talked about earlier. The government split apart at numerous and very deep ethnic, religion and linguistic divisions.

In a way we felt that, while this was an authoritarian regime, there was no real alternative at the present time. The country had been organized politically, unfortunately, along these religious, linguistic and cultural divisions within the society. This meant you really had a politics of survival, to a large degree, as one very bright Indonesian, who later became Ambassador here, Koko Soeojatmoko, pointed out. When you have survival politics you have the sort of thing that occurred after the coup when the Moslems, who believed that their existence had been put in jeopardy, reacted out of a very deep rooted fear, which had been installed by the Communist when they were assassinating a number of the Moslem religious leaders in eastern Java. We had this terrible massacre of the Abangan population by the Moslem population in Java. And similar events happened in both North Sumatra and Bali.

It seemed to most of us who watched it that they had to get beyond these parties and perhaps the only way was a military-led regime because the military, as most of the



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democratically inclined Indonesians recognized at that time, was the only body that transcended these deep traditions in the society. The army included all of the ethnic groups and was one group that was nationally oriented and had representatives of the Moslems, the Christians, the Abangan, Hindus, and peoples of every ethnic group. Of course it also had representatives of the Communists, as well. They were the ones who killed the generals and installed the revolutionary council. The Communists were, of course, then eliminated from the army and from many other organizations.

So we thought, and I think this was readily accepted by the Nixon administration as well, that the Suharto army-based regime was the only solution. This was also accepted by most of the democratic intellectuals in Indonesia at the time. Not just most, but virtually all of them felt that an army-based regime was their only opportunity to have stability and development. So I don't think it was ever a question as to whether or not we supported the Suharto army-based regime, the question was how much and I think there were some of us who felt that we would be doing them a disservice if we leaned over backward and looked upon them as an ally. They would resent it. There was still a strong anti-colonialist feeling within the military of and a strong feeling that they did not want to be too close to the United States because of our role in the 1958 rebellion in Sumatra.

Even though there were some people in the military who were trying to entice us into a larger assistance program, we thought it best to keep a low profile at that time...and to keep our "program" moderate and do most of the aid through multilateral programs. This means that our bilateral interests would be indirectly served rather than directly served through multilateral programs. We thought it would be best served by channeling most of our aid through the World Bank consortium and going very light on the military side. You did have a military-base machine which was putting all of its weight on economic development to the point of actually not buying any military equipment beyond the essentials. So we thought it best to keep them on this course.



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As I recall, we ended up in our national security document recommending a \$25 million of military assistance and virtually all of it would be civic action. This was accepted by Kissinger.

*Q: I would think there would be a problem on something like this. Those on the field know what is working, but if you are, say in the NSC, you want to be doing something, chalking up allies, and be able to paint Indonesia on the map white as opposed to the Communist instead of red. There must have been a lot of battles.*

GARDNER: Yes. The NSC was overwhelming strong, especially if the White House was interested. If the White House is interested, everybody wants to get into the act. And everybody for their own careers and for their own reasons all want to get programs going. Well Indonesia did attract some people in this way. Some of us believed that the reason they were able to have what turned out to be a rather good policy...the low profile policy was that the White House was completely absorbed with Vietnam at that time. So as long as you didn't tie something to Vietnam, and it was very difficult to tie the Indonesian situation to Vietnam at that time, you didn't have all that amount of interest throughout Washington. You were able to base policy a little bit more on the local imperative, without losing sight, of course, of your overall national aims. We felt our national aims were best served this way. Let the Indonesians take care of it themselves.

Indonesia was too big for us for one thing and the second thing is that our hand was somewhat tainted by our past. Indonesia still didn't agree with us on Vietnam and we could better build up credit by taking a low profile and giving them adequate economic aid, which we did. We were forthcoming with that. But keeping military aid to a minimum. We did furnish one-third of their economic needs as determined by the World Bank consortium. Japan furnished a third and all other countries the last third.

*Q: From Indonesia you got yourself very much involved in the Indochina thing, from 1972-74. You went to Phnom Penh.*



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GARDNER: Yes. This was just as we intervened in Cambodia by supporting the Lon Nol revolt against Sihanouk. There were a number of us in the Department then, especially among the younger people, who disagreed with this step by the Kissinger/Nixon White House. They felt we should not have taken this road in Cambodia. I was among this group.

*Q: The initial one where we charged into Cambodia was in 1970 wasn't it?*

GARDNER: Yes.

*Q: I was in Saigon at the time.*

GARDNER: There was a group of us younger people in the East Asian Bureau who opposed this. We even held a meeting to put the views forward, that it was wrong to have such a military role in Cambodia. Happily, we didn't get much press publicity.

*Q: There was a group of young officers who made the press and Nixon was after their necks.*

GARDNER: The group that I met with based their stance on moral grounds. I didn't feel that was the proper grounds because it was hard to determine morality in what was happening in Vietnam. Certainly the morality wasn't on the Communist side. I personally felt that the grounds should be that it doesn't serve our interests or the Cambodians interest because we would in fact be substituting yourself for Cambodia initiative.

This was the feeling I had and it was based on the Indonesian experience. Indonesia had handled things by itself and done so much better. The hardest thing for Americans to do is not to get in and fix things. We are very activist inclined. When something is going your way, just let it be, especially in an alien culture in which your hand shows so much. But Americans find that very difficult to do because we are can-do people. I disagreed with the policy in Cambodia and felt that we should not have gone in. My personal feeling, one I maintained throughout, was that Cambodia was used to relying on other powers to



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shield them. They were used to being a protectorate. They had always been in a sense a protectorate and relied on a great power, be it France, China or another country. I didn't feel that the United States made a very good protecting power, particularly in Southeast Asia. The French didn't do too well either, except they were there for quite a long time.

We had meetings and said things orally, but none of the people that I was involved with in the East Asian Bureau got hurt. We were such a young group that I don't think we really mattered. We let our views be known, but they didn't go very far. We were very junior in rank.

*Q: I think the real thing that disturbed Nixon, personally, was the fact that there were other groups that went public during the time.*

GARDNER: I disagreed with those who eventually got in control of the meeting and based the opposition on moral grounds. I don't think any of them got into trouble. Certainly it got out, that we didn't approve of it, and the White House was angry, but I can't think of any individual career that suffered.

*Q: All I recall, and this is vague, is that Nixon called Rogers and said, "Do something" and Rogers put on a stall in order to protect those opposing the position.*

GARDNER: We were protected by both Green and Rogers, I think, to a large degree. I just have a feeling that Green may have agreed with us, although I don't know, I never asked him. He was closer to the power center and he didn't get along with Kissinger, and I think Indochina was one of the reasons. I don't know the details of that. I do know there was an estrangement between the East Asian Bureau and the NSC at that time over Cambodia. So I felt, it was really quite something for them to decide to send me to Cambodia in charge of political/military affairs. I had the responsibility and actually a role in the military intervention that I had disagreed with to begin with. So this called for discipline because



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you were implementing a policy you don't agree with but it was our job to do so. I tried to do my best to implement it.

*Q: You went there in 1972-74.*

GARDNER: Yes. I went to the War College first for a year and then went out to Cambodia.

*Q: What was the situation in Cambodia when you went out there in 1972?*

GARDNER: It was bad. I guess we were hopeful at that time. The entire time I was there the only areas held by non-Communist forces were larger towns and they were under periodic attack. Phnom Penh had some of its worst attacks before I got there, but there were several after I got there as well. Rocket attacks, principally, with one attack by sappers that actually controlled the central part of the city one night. They captured some armored vehicles in the stadium and actually took them over and controlled the central part of the city during the night. We learned this through our radio system and consequently stayed home until they were wiped out. But otherwise, we had periodic rocket attacks which caused some casualties. I think it was more or less going along this line before I got there and when I got there things really didn't change very much.

We had our moments of optimism, but basically, especially with people like me, I guess it was a basic pessimism I felt. I felt, and I wrote, that the military ...and I dealt with them quite a bit and I respected many members among the Cambodian military...but I felt that they felt that we would do the job for them. Some of them were aggressive, some were brave generals, but on the whole I felt that they wanted us to take care of it as a protectorate.

They tended to fuss among themselves quite a bit, a tremendous bit, in fact, which was very disheartening. I mean, I can recall one dinner that I sat with several generals. One of the generals and the head of the navy ...this was when things were looking pretty bad and they felt it was time to get rid of Lon Nol. I thought, "My God, you have the enemy



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all around you here and here are these two people who had drunk too much [they had a tendency to drink too much cognac] who are talking about a coup and trying to get the Americans to give them a go ahead against Lon Nol while the enemy completely surrounded the capital city.”

Of course we rejected this out of hand. They felt that they could make a better defense without Lon Nol, but that didn't make sense because I couldn't see really that they had any different strategy to do the job better. None of us could. But what was very disheartening was to find them concentrating on the wrong thing—how to handle their own future within the army and the regime as a whole, instead of getting control over the countryside. It was very disillusioning.

I wrote an airgram on the military which I think displeased a great number of people, but which our military attach# agreed with entirely. Certainly my boss didn't agree with it at the time. Tom Enders, whom I respect tremendously. A fabulous person with a fabulous mind. But I think he was really put off with an airgram in which I more or less said that our ally was not all that dependable. He was serving as Charg# at that time with Kissinger and I think perhaps he thought it looked a little bit defeatist. But at the same time I tried my best to see that they weren't defeated.

Primarily the programs I concentrated on were some counterinsurgency programs which I found gave disappointing results; some civil action gave slightly better results; and then I was saddled with helping them to install a draft, because they really didn't have obligatory military service even though the country was about to fall.

Again the draft was to a large degree designed by us and in order to see that they were doing things we asked to have periodic trips to the training grounds where they had these drafted youngsters. I felt it was essential. I had a very bad opinion of the other side. I was not as surprised as some by what occurred afterwards with the Khmer Rouge. So I felt they really had to be able to protect their lives. But the fact is that they really didn't want to



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do it. None of the people wanted to be drafted. None of them wanted to fight. None of the generals wanted to make them do it. This was sort of a permissive society to some degree and yet you felt that you had to get a draft program going. So it was quite dismaying visiting all these training camps and seeing how they were coming along and finding things were not all that gung ho with these groups.

Although they were carrying out the thing, because we insisted on it and their money and everything else came from us, I think they continued to rely on the B-52 strikes which occasionally hit some military targets. The B-52s blew up the ammunition dump of the Vietnamese with a loud bang at one time down south. But they also, I am afraid, killed a great number of civilians. Some on our own side. One of my grimmest tasks was to go down to a town on the Mekong River which was under friendly control and which had taken a rack of friendly B-52 bombs and see the disaster caused by the bombing. In this case they bombed territory which the Cambodian government held and there were many, many civilian casualties.

*Q: Wasn't this depicted in the movie, "The Killing Fields?"*

GARDNER: I haven't seen that. I think many of us who served in Cambodia shy away from such movies. We have some very strong feeling about what we saw there. We lost most of our friends, who were killed afterwards. I had a mental block afterwards. I couldn't remember things about Cambodia afterwards. I wasn't there when the country fell, but it was well along the way. It fell about eight months after I left. But it was a very, very disappointing period. Virtually everybody you knew was later killed. Many were people who you respected tremendously, perhaps not as generals and military people, but as people.

But I think we made a mistake then. I thought it when I was there and I think it now. We tried our best to buck them up and to give them the wherewithal to fight, but I think we were too big of a protective power. We were so powerful, we had so much money, that



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they really basically thought that we would handle things. And we didn't and couldn't handle things without their help.

*Q: What sort of reports were you getting about the Khmer Rouge?*

GARDNER: Well, they were killing people. They would take over a city, like they took over Kompong Cham, for a couple of days, knowing they would not be able to hold it. And they killed virtually everyone with any sort of education. I mean just massacred everyone. The place was recovered so we saw what they were doing. It wasn't just reports. We saw in this case.

*Q: Did you get any feel as to what was motivating this as opposed to what one gathers from what you are saying and from other accounts that these were basically a rather peaceful, passive people and why was there this virulent strain as bad as anywhere in the world?*

GARDNER: Yes, it is hard to understand the Khmer Rouge. I think all of us had a difficult time. We tried what we could to find out something about them. The ones that we really had some information about because they had studied in France, weren't really Son Sen and Pol Pot, they were Khieu Samphan and some of the others. Looking at their biographies you wouldn't think that they were all that bad, although they were obviously very ardent Marxist and strong revolutionaries. But I don't think they were the ones who were controlling the policy. The ones who were controlling the policy we didn't know much about. To this day we don't know very much about Pol Pot or Son Sen and some of those people who are really controlling the troops and what they were doing.

It is a difficult thing to fathom, except you do realize that, although what we call the Hinduized culture puts a peaceful veneer on things and represses anger, sometimes underneath you have some raging going on and it breaks out in riots like in Indonesia. It broke out in Thailand in much the same way from time to time. When violence does occur it can be very, very brutal. Perhaps this is in part because hostility is repressed in most



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day-to-day reactions and confrontation is avoided. But when it breaks out, it breaks out big. This does not really explain the Khmer Rouge, however. Perhaps Pol Pot's craving for power and his personal cruelty which accounts for much of the Khmer Rouge's activities.

*Q: What was the status of the Embassy? Emory Swank was the Ambassador at that time and Tom Enders was Deputy Chief of Mission. How did they operate in this type of situation?*

GARDNER: Well, they were two very different personalities. Both I respect highly. But both had a different approach. Tom was an activist and Coby was not. I think Coby really felt there should have been a negotiated peace there. Tom was really enmeshed in our military role there and particularly in our air support, which got him into a bit of trouble when they discovered that many of the air operations we were planning in the Embassy. When parts of Washington discovered it...some Congressional staffers, etc....Tom was really conducting that to some degree. He wasn't a general or anything like that. I am not trying to say that he took a military role, but he had overall management of a program to give the Cambodians air support. Some of the concepts, I think, came from him...what our role should be there.

Coby was aware of it, of course, but he took a more hands off attitude towards it. He left and Tom became Charg# d'Affaires. I think Kissinger felt that Tom was more aggressive. I am not saying one was right and one was wrong. Frankly, in a sense, our government was wrong. Us being there was wrong. A negotiated settlement would have been a disaster because the Khmer Rouge would not have settled for anything less...the negotiations would not have succeeded in my view.

The military one seemed to be out the window as well. You couldn't really say that the military situation was completely out of the window because the real key to it was Vietnam. The Khmer Rouge did very little on their own. The sappers I talked about who took over the center of Phnom Penh were all Vietnamese. Behind all the Khmer Rouge regiments



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were Vietnamese artillery regiments and Vietnamese backup. This was a very difficult group to defeat because the Vietnamese were there. So really in a sense Cambodia's fate was sealed by Vietnam's fate. Had we not cut off our role in Vietnam, had Congress not cut off our role in South Vietnam, we might have been able to build up the South Vietnamese to a point where they would have held the Viet Cong at bay. In that case our role could have been successful in Cambodia simply because the Vietnamese were such an important element in the Khmer Rouge offensive when we were there. I think the Khmer Rouge could have easily beaten the Cambodian troops, but perhaps not with the B-52 and air support that we were giving them from Thailand. And perhaps not with the equipment that we were giving them.

So you could say that there could have been a possible victory there. There is no way of disproving it now. So in a sense neither Coby nor Tom were wrong. A negotiated peace might even have been possible if we had helped out in South Vietnam. Or a military victory would have been possible. But in the actual circumstance, I think we were just in a position where there was no win. Whoever was there, whatever policy he had, it wasn't going to work in Cambodia.

*Q: How about the CIA? Did you find that this was a post that the CIA was in a way running things?*

GARDNER: No, I don't think they were running things. at all. No one else runs things when Tom Enders is in charge. He runs his own show. But they had a very big role because they were the only representatives in the provinces. They were supporting the Cambodian military in the provinces. So there were a great number of them. They were very much in an operational role, much as they were in Vietnam. But policy was really Kissinger and Nixon because this was a White House run policy. It was run through the JCS and CIA, but it was really White House policy as far as I could see. I think we all followed it. Some more wholeheartedly than others. I think we all tried to do our best to see that that particular policy worked. But some were obviously much more activist than Coby Swank.



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I wasn't determining policy which I disagreed with years before. I was trying to implement it as best we could because I don't think we had any other choice at that point. We had engaged these people and they were going to die one way or another if we didn't try to help them and get them to help themselves. I did as much as I could to see that the draft was a success. That is about all you can say.

*Q: Once you are engaged, you are engaged.*

GARDNER: I sat in on every meeting with the headquarters group. We had almost daily meetings with the top generals...briefings, etc. They were all in French. I sat in on those with our military people there. We had a brigadier general as our principal representative. The US military group was small because the number of people we could have there was set by Congress. That was a handicap.

*Q: When did you leave in 1974?*

GARDNER: I think it was in June. I guess it fell the next April.

*Q: Something like that, yes. April, 1975.*

GARDNER: Then it was ten months later.

*Q: Not very optimistic when you left, then.*

GARDNER: I still had some hope when I left. You had to keep hope or else you really became depressed...I mean, having seen what the Khmer Rouge was capable of at Kompong Cham. All the reports from the people of how the Khmer Rouge killed and how many were killed...they killed virtually anyone who had an elementary education. Whole schools were wiped out. Anyone with any type of education, whatsoever, they killed. We were aware of this, that they were brutal. You would be in the depths of depression if you



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felt there wasn't some hope. Once it fell, of course, you were in depression as well over what would occur afterwards.

*Q: What was your next assignment?*

GARDNER: I went to Turkey as mutual security affairs counselor at the Embassy.

*Q: This was from 1974-76. Was it a direct transfer?*

GARDNER: No, I went on home leave and got caught by the Cyprus war.

*Q: I was going to say...I had just left Athens the first of July of 1974. So what happened?*

GARDNER: I was on my way to the post and was caught in Rome, which wasn't a bad place. There were no flights available because of the Cyprus war so I was stuck in Rome for several days. When I got to Turkey the situation was quite different than when my assignment was made. Obviously we had a problem over Cyprus and a problem with Congress and their decision to take some actions against the Turks. The Turks then renounced our mutual security agreement.

Well this gave me a lot of work to do because we had a large number of installations in Turkey and a large number of military personnel scattered all over Turkey and suddenly there they were without an agreement to cover them. The Turks claimed that Congress had broken the agreement. So my job was quite simply to negotiate an agreement with the Turks at a time when they were very angry with us. No Turks showed up to our Fourth of July party.

I also had to worry about what they might be doing to our installations. Theoretically they were closed down, but they let our personnel stay on, but theoretically they couldn't do any work. There were all sorts of little problems that would arise. Some people would take action against our posts, etc.



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So between negotiating and trying to keep the status of the military and their safety in the country I was busy. It took me virtually the full two years. We did reach an agreement about six months before I left. I was scheduled to stay there another year but they called me up and asked me if I would come to Indonesia because they needed a political counselor there, so I left and went back to Indonesia.

*Q: On this, did all of you in the Embassy feel that you were really negotiating on two sides...one with the Turks and the other with Congress?*

GARDNER: Well, when you get into a negotiating condition like that you have many more sides than that. Obviously we had to negotiate an agreement...I was the head of the working group that was composed of a number of military, some people from Washington. I was the chairman of the working group which did most of the actual negotiating. We just left the toughest things—the bracketed language including how much aid we were going to give them—to be decided by a higher negotiating group. But I led the American side and there was a Department of Foreign Affairs person that led the Turkish group, which was also composed like my group of a lot of colonels. We had trouble with Defense, the Department and the White House, all three, and Congress. So you had to look four different ways.

There were some things that the Department and Defense disagreed on. Was it really necessary to fly our flag over the base? Couldn't we call it a Turkish base as long as it did the same thing? Things like this, because this would set precedents for other military negotiations. We knew this was going to set a tremendous precedent for all of our NATO agreements and our non-NATO agreements to boot. So we had a lot of people looking over our shoulders.

At the same time we had some very tough negotiators. Those Turks are very tough negotiators. I really respected them quite a bit. They really did their homework. They argued very cogently and stubbornly. Some of the stubbornest people you will ever meet.



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But very, very intelligent. They are really very, very good allies and we wanted to keep them as allies. This was our hope. There were times that we just didn't know whether they really wanted an agreement or not. The Turks were very good at keeping us guessing as to whether they really wanted an agreement or not.

*Q: But they knew that you wanted an agreement?*

GARDNER: They knew we wanted an agreement. They knew what was up with us. They knew that Greece was over on the other side. We had a strong feeling that they wanted us there. But we weren't absolutely sure because they were so angry. The Turks are highly nationalistic. We were not sure they wouldn't carry it to the point of actually getting rid of the base agreement.

*Q: When you are saying this...okay they are very good negotiators, they knew their subject, etc., in some ways what difference does this make. I mean if you have two nations no matter how good negotiators you are...usually there are concerns, after all there is the Soviet Union, there is Greece...Do things fall into place no matter how good the negotiations are or not?*

GARDNER: I think the Turks wanted to see if they could find something they could live with and we just wondered if we could produce something they could live with under these circumstances. Obviously they weren't going to give up the relationship as a whole. There was no talk about them getting out of NATO, not with the Soviet Union next door. But what worried us was that we had an awful lot of intelligence gathering bases there. Also we had an Air Force base there which just figured recently in the Iraq crises, Incirlik Air Force Base. We could have lost use of those things. We had far more in Turkey than we had in Greece, for example. And Turkey was geographically more important to us because of its borders along the Black Sea. Some of our installations were duplicated in Iran at that time, but you know what happened to Iran.



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We tried to pretend that the facilities were not that valuable to us...satellites were taking over on this type of thing, etc, not fully meaning it, however, because they really were of some value still. The military was very dyed-in-the-wool about regulations and they had certain things about US bases. It was very hard to get Defense to change its attitude about these things.

*Q: I have talked to people who have been involved in Portugal on the Azores negotiations, and particularly when you get back to the lawyers at the Department of Defense, they are very difficult.*

GARDNER: Yes, it is very difficult. So a lot of our problems were with Defense, although we did work them out. Defense did give in many ways in the crucial areas like flags, etc. that I felt really didn't matter. We did finally get an agreement. The price tag on that agreement, was something the colonels and I ( I was an FSO-2 career counselor at the time) couldn't decide. There were a few other things that could only be taken care of at the Cabinet level. So the negotiations moved up to the Ambassador with the Foreign Minister for the last part. I was aide to the Ambassador and that was a pure State Department thing because at that time there was only the Ambassador and me on our side...

*Q: That Ambassador at that time was?*

GARDNER: Macomber. Bill Macomber and me on one side and their Foreign Minister and my counterpart on the other side. So there were only four of us in this room. We felt it was necessary to take it down to that level for the last key points. I think we agreed virtually on everything except the amount, which was left open for the last stage of meetings with Kissinger in Washington. By that time it was clear, however, that there would be an agreement. We were quite comfortable that we had reached an agreement. Kissinger and his counterpart, in a few days here in Washington, arrived at the money amounts and negotiated the last clauses.



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The agreement was not accepted by Congress, but that is another story and I was out of the picture by that time. It had to be renegotiated. I think Congress balked at the price. But by that time the government in Turkey had changed and we had a government in Turkey that was amenable and this reduced the pressure to a large degree. So when Congress did refuse to accept the agreement...As I recall it was never actually sent to Congress because there were clear messages from Congress that they wouldn't sign it. I may be wrong because by that time I was out of country. One way or the other it was learned that it wouldn't float with the Senate.

But by that time the regime had changed in Turkey and another negotiator did what changes were required and the Turks accepted them to get the large aid that was being offered.

*Q: Well you left in 1976. By that time did you get the feeling that the situation in Cyprus was going to be there for some time and they were going to have to live with it?*

GARDNER: I think the Turks made it pretty clear that they weren't going to leave the Turks on Cyprus to the Greeks. They made that quite clear. I personally never felt that there was an easy solution to this, unless they came to an agreement that would give the Turks a really large role in the governing of Cyprus. I wasn't involved in that side of things because I was completely tied up on the base negotiations.

One point I would like to make that really bothered me about working on things like this is the degree that lawyers do get involved in treaties. Of course this is very important from our point of view, because we are such a law abiding, "observe the letter of the law" society. The Lawyers wanted language to safeguard every possible situation in the future. One of these horrible contracts that our government tries to force on people from time to time. It makes you guarantee things for all sorts of contingencies which were not there and which I found quite stupid because no one pays attention to this kind of language.



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So I did an airgram which the Department of State applauded, but which I am sure Defense did not applaud at all, in which I pointed out what the Turks had done under our other agreement. I said that everything that many of their acts you could consider violations. Then I pointed out why they had made these violations—they were to be expected. Then I said, “You must take into consideration what they are going to do whether or not you have this language or not; you are stupid to try to put this language in to protect yourself. In many cases they are not going to accept it because it looks as if we are tying them up in knots.” We tend to do this with every country, by the way. Our lawyers are really...

*Q: I know. I have heard this in dealing with Morocco, etc.*

GARDNER: But if you looked at our last agreement you could see that they had violated it all over the place, so why have language that you know is going to be violated from the beginning. That doesn't make any sense just to protect yourself. Of course you have to worry about Congress and other things.

Eventually we got the kind of agreement that was necessary and I was in charge of the first stage, the first document which later had to be changed.

*Q: What was your impression of the Embassy when you arrived just after this catastrophe for American-Turkish relations? The invasion of Cyprus, which I considered well justified considering what the Greeks and the Greek-Cypriots had done. How was the Embassy responding to this diplomatic disaster?*

GARDNER: Oh, well, we had a very forceful Ambassador and they responded the way he wanted them to do. I think he was quite effective. We had a very large military presence in there that I worked with and many of them were quite good. I was really impressed with some of the military that I did work with. Especially at the colonel level. The ones on my



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team really did a good job. I found the general, as well, easy to work with. We had some good generals there. There were some exceptions, but that always occurs.

The hatches were battened down, obviously, because suddenly a friendly atmosphere turned unfriendly as far as the government was concerned. We had to host a Fourth of July party to which very few Turks came, but I had done that before. Otherwise it was fine.

*Q: Before we leave this could you describe the operating style and impressions of William Macomber as ambassador? He was a major figure in the foreign policy annuals.*

GARDNER: He was very effective with the Turks. They really liked him and respected him. He can be a very gracious person as an American host for Turks. He is a very stern taskmaster of an Embassy and he did not always have control of his temper.

*Q: I just finished doing an interview with some one who had served with him at an early time. His temper is one of the traditions of the State Department.*

GARDNER: But it does affect morale. There is no doubt about it. I think all of us respected him as an Ambassador and felt he was effective. He obviously is very, very good at social events. He was good to me really on the whole. We worked together on the defense agreement. He got me a promotion. But he lost his temper with me occasionally and made me feel like dirt. He did this occasionally in front of other people. He did this to everybody at one stage or another. When he would go to London sometimes, we said that you could hear the sigh of relief all the way to London.

His working manner was difficult at times. He would call staff meetings. Once at 3 o'clock in the morning when he received a cable he got the whole country team together. After we gathered we found that he had misread the cable and it really was not all that important. But he said, "While you are here, lets go..." That shows two things. One, that he really felt that we shouldn't let anything like sleep keep us from our job. He was busy at 3:00 in



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the morning too. He wasn't one of those Ambassadors who got angry with you when you brought in a problem. He would be angry if you didn't bring the problem to him.

While he could be very abusive orally, I have never seen him abusive in writing. He always said good things about people in writing. I heard him bawl out the Acting Secretary of State on the telephone one time. So it is not only his underlings, he sometimes took on his bosses because he lost his temper. But he never lost his temper in writing to my knowledge. And that is a good thing. I have never seen him write a nasty efficiency report...of course I didn't read all of his efficiency reports, but I have never seen him write a nasty letter. That was a lesson to me and I have tried to follow that myself...to never get angry in writing.

*Q: Then you left Turkey in 1976?*

GARDNER: Yes. Could I run back to Cambodia and tell you about one incident? It shows something about Tom Enders that was rather interesting.

One morning I was going to work early and I noticed a big column of smoke right in front of me. I said to myself, "Something has happened on that street, I am going to take another street." So I went around and on to the Embassy the other way. What I found out was that Tom's car had been bombed. There was a plastique bomb that had been prepositioned on the street, against the wall on the side of the street...he was Charg# at the time and came by without riders and guards in his car and his car was armored. The bomb was detonated as his car had passed. It had killed his outriders and set his car on fire. He escaped from his car which was heavily armored. I went in to find what had happened when I got to the Embassy. Had I been trailing him I would have been killed too, because I had no armor on my car. Had I gotten up three minutes earlier, I would have been killed.

I found him in his office later. He didn't want to talk about it. He said, let's get to business. He held a staff meeting. Somebody asked him about the bomb and he said that he didn't want to talk about it. He walked back to his office...I was serving as DCM during most



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of the time when he was Charg#, so I walked in to see him. At the time I had a very bad back, which I still have, and I had been given Valium as a muscle relaxant from my leg pains. I said, "Tom, you have had a traumatic experience. You just had people killed all around you and your car blown up with this tremendous blast. The noise alone must have set your nerves on edge. I have some Valium here which I take for my back, wouldn't you like one?" He just said, "Paul, you can keep your drugs." He was a tough hombre. He didn't want to talk about it, but he didn't lose his cool, nor did he lose his focus on the embassy's business. He had to attend the funerals of those who were killed afterwards. He was rather a fantastic person.

*Q: Then you went from Turkey back to Indonesia?*

GARDNER: I went back to Indonesia as political counselor under David Newsom.

*Q: You were there for...*

GARDNER: I was there for almost five years. For the last three years I was Deputy Chief of Mission under Ed Masters.

*Q: What was the situation then? You had been in two other areas at time of stress and now you are back in Indonesia after the tremendous events of 1965. How did you find Indonesia? This was from 1976-81.*

GARDNER: First I found it was a different country. It wasn't the country I left. I landed in an airport that I had never seen before. We went into town on a highway that I had never been on before. There were buildings around that I had never seen before. But the same old Embassy. I wondered if I was really in the right place when I landed. There had been so many changes. During the entire four years that I had been there earlier nothing had changed except the regime. No one had constructed anything for years, the economy was so horrible. There had been no new buildings for years, or new roads. And here was this great big highway that we were just zooming along to town. I was used to taking hours



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to get to an airport that was much closer to the Embassy. In any event, a lot of things had changed obviously. But I found when I really got down to it that a lot of things hadn't changed.

One of the things that struck me when I was taken with the Ambassador to see the Foreign Minister was the difference between the Turks and the Indonesians. I couldn't hear anything the Prime Minister was saying. I was so used to having the Turks shout at me I had lost my ear for the very soft voiced Indonesians who never raised their voices. That was one of my problems, getting my ear attuned to some people. The other thing is that the Indonesian language is so dynamic that it created all these new words. But I found my old friends were the same, unlike Americans when you come back...they have gone off and done their own thing during the years you have been gone and you have to work to get back on the same wave length. With my Indonesian friends it was as if I had never left. We started off right where we had left off. But their situation had changed. Most of them were on the outs when I was there before. They were nobodies when I left and were somebodies when I returned.

A young man that I taught, who I may have mentioned earlier, when I was teaching a few months at the teachers college, who had helped with the Moslem demonstration against the Embassy...one of the first things I noticed was that he was on television giving English courses. This guy was really on the outs before.

There was my guide in Sulawesi in 1964, who I had helped by giving him \$10 a month from his American family. He was a director of Union Carbide—this little kid. He was still in his '20s. He had gone back to the US and gotten a MBA from Buffalo and had been appointed director of Union Carbide.

The agriculture professor who lost his job because he was a poet advocating freedom of speech, he was head of the fine arts faculty. That was great.



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A young man that I had helped to get to Belgium by giving him money to buy a suit, was the editor of the nation's best magazine.

The heads of various families I had known, who had been jailed by Sukarno, were now all out. It was good to see them. Some of the big figures from the past like an acting president Sjafruddin Prawirawegara and one of the first prime ministers Mohamad Natsir, both jailed by Sukarno and because having had contact with the Moslem groups before, I got to know them. It was great knowing these great figures from the past even though they were not all together in with the regime. Mohammed Roem, a wonderful person who had been one of the first foreign ministers of Indonesia, was out of jail. He was such a wonderful person. And Mechtar Lubis, I got to know. He was the country's top novelist, who had been jailed as well. To see all these people who had been in jail come back into prominence was just wonderful. They were all demonstrating their intellectual capabilities in one way or another.

It was a very exciting period for me. It was a very quiet period as far as American policy went because it was economically oriented really. They were still focused on their economic program which so far had been really amazingly successful. But it still had a ways to go. It still has a ways to go now. There is still a lot of poverty there.

One of the things that we were concerned about was how much of this was reaching the countryside. Some of the things that I worked on as political counselor was to actually go out and look at all the various programs in the countryside and see if they were helping the people economically. And quite frankly I thought that they were. This was pleasing. There were a lot of lacuna obviously and it was still a pretty miserable existence for a lot of people, especially among the urban poor. But because of their emphasis on agriculture, and the green revolution, great strides had been made in the countryside. And that was pleasing to see.



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I had come from places where the stress was quite high and things were changing. Stress was not high at all there because we had a good relationship with the government. We just had to worry about the things that you normally worry about.

One of the big things at the time was human rights. This was the time when Carter had come in with his human rights policy. We had a lot of visits on that subject because of the communist prisoners. I think there were 60,000 PKI prisoners. There was quite a bit of agitation to get them released. Our problem was serving, as you like, as a coupling device for some very active human rights campaigners who had led marches in Alabama. Pat Derian came out. We had to couple Pat Derian in Indonesia where people didn't make marches against the government or against anything else. And where you didn't show openly conflict. You didn't even show disagreement. These things were handled in a different manner. This was a trait of our society which is not at all appreciated by Javanese, who are very strong in preserving outward harmony in their relationships. Public criticism is not acceptable. Well, these human rights activists were critics from the beginning. That's all they were. Their whole career had been criticizing human rights violation. And they were campaigners, flag carriers. So we had a problem.

This upset the Indonesians, not only making our relationship difficult, but making the PKI problem more difficult as well, because they wouldn't go easy on the PKI just to please us. But on the other hand, this was a new Indonesian society. This was 1976 and they were eleven years away from the uprising and were much more comfortable with themselves. The Communist threat wasn't as big as it was before. I think they still had a fear of China and the Chinese using the Communists and this type of thing, but they were a little more confident with their ability to handle it. And they were more open then before and were concerned with their reputation, I think.

And most of the people that I've known were really freedom of speech lovers; they had risen in this society because of their Western training...not because of their democratic beliefs but because of their Western training. Most of them had degrees from abroad.



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And they had the technical competence that the new regime needed with its emphasis on adaptation to a market economy. So, they were somebodies at that time and could get their views expressed a little bit better, I think. They were handling the media and some of the other things. Like I said my friend was an editor and he was also discriminated against by the Sukarno regime for having been for freedom of speech.

So obviously the type of atmosphere that one had then was more conducive to releasing the PKI prisoners. So we were able to...I am not saying that we persuaded them to release them, I think they persuaded themselves that this was the best thing for them to do.

They had release ceremonies and one of the more interesting things I did, I think I mentioned it earlier, was to go around to these ceremonies and see some of these people and see what had happened to them. I would like to go back and see what has happened to them now, but that is something you can't do. That would be really interfering in a society, something as a foreigner one shouldn't do. Once you start trying to take temperatures like this and go back and say, "What happened to that PKI person, let me go back and talk to him again?" it is like a physics experiment by measuring it you change it.

*Q: Pat Derian was a very interesting person. She was the Assistant Secretary for Human Rights. This was a brand new program. Her experience came from Mississippi where she came from in the civil rights movement. She arrives on the foreign affairs scene as did Andrew Young at the United Nations. They were still playing out their battles on the international scene, which is different. She arrives out there. How did you deal with her?*

GARDNER: We had some trepidations about this because of what she might say publicly, etc. But we had a very good Ambassador, David Newsom, who was used to handling this type of problem. I think they realized that the best thing was to get these prisoners released, not to get headlines saying—We told Suharto he should release these people and that they were doing everything wrong and they should do right like we say. Getting those headlines would mean they weren't getting released. They were concerned about



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their careers, there is no doubt about that...I think she generally thought of herself as a Joan of Arc sort of figure. She had her mission in life. But she went along with what we suggested.

At the same time because we had this high level attention, we got into prisons and saw people...I got to go through some of the prisons with her. Speaking Indonesian I could talk to some of the prisoners. I met Carmel Budiardjo's husband there. I am not a fan of Carmel Budiardjo, although she is very active in the Amnesty International, she was herself a very strong Communist and suspected of getting quite a few people fired from Indonesian universities because of their anti-Communist beliefs. I did feel sorry for her husband, however, who I feel was not really the Communist in the family. He seemed to be very much a Javanese type. I ran across him there and asked him if that was who he was and he said, "Yes." So I asked him a few questions. He was later released and has remained quiet while Carmel goes about her stuff blasting the Indonesian government whenever she gets a chance. So this was an opportunity for us also to get into the prisons. Newsom played it very well.

I can remember one particular case, not with her, but with a visiting congressional delegation from the House. We were sitting in a meeting with General Murdavi, who was giving us a briefing. There were some questions afterwards and one of the staff members was asking questions that were really inquisitorial. David Newsom simply interrupted the meeting saying, "You are not putting Murdavi in a chair to testify in front of Congress here. We are here to hear his briefing." Immediately Congressman Wolfe, the head of the group, seized on this and turned the staffer off.

We had some people pursuing their own agenda, you know. Some were doing their own politicking and getting the Indonesian military angry, which Newsom could see, and he immediately interposed himself and got the thing back on the right track. He was a master at handling this type of thing.



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So it all came out all right. They released all of the PKI prisoners. Our people got their plaudits for helping out and I think the Indonesians found that they could live with the ex-PKI people. Now they are going to let them vote, or at least most of them. So I think it has turned out okay.

*Q: Was East Timor a problem at the time?*

GARDNER: Yes, a very big problem.

*Q: Could you explain what the problem was and then what happened while you were there?*

GARDNER: It had happened just before I arrived there. Timor was a Portuguese colony and, as many of the other Portuguese colonies, it had some far leftist military there. There was a Marxist movement called Fretilin which was supported by some elements of the military. The Portuguese were leaving the colony and the Fretilin seemed to be taking over. These were pretty brutal people, the Fretilin were. Not as brutal as the Khmer Rouge, but they had already killed quite a few people. The Indonesians had already had a sort of puppet party there. A party they had promoted and were giving money to. It was a party of little significance.

Because the Portuguese colony shared the island of Timor, with Indonesia, the eastern part was Portuguese and the western part of Timor was Indonesian. So it was one of the few places where Indonesia shared a border with another country and this country seemed to be turning Communist. So Indonesia surreptitiously invaded it, basically to support the non-Communist side and put its own puppet party...although it was really a small minority party...in power.

This happened before I arrived, but we had to deal with the consequences of this in Congress and the bigger consequences in Australia because a number of Australian journalists had been killed by Indonesian military during this takeover. We will never know



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the complete story about this, but it was unfortunate, to say the least. But there was some bloodshed, of course, when the Indonesians went in and there had been bloodshed before of which the Fretilin were guilty. Then, of course, the Fretilin and the Indonesians engaged in combat. The Fretilin as guerilla troops mainly and the Indonesians controlled the cities.

So this was looked on by some as conquering another country. The United States didn't recognize that there had been free choice in Timor but recognized that Indonesia was the administrative power, because it was there. I don't think our policy condoned it, but it certainly accepted the consequences of it. Many in Congress were very, very worried about the human rights aspects of it. And we felt that Indonesia had its own reputation to think of, a reputation which really could be blacken by Timor. Our policy was trying to get the Indonesians to open Timor up. In other words, let people in and see what's happening and they will understand.

The Portuguese had left the country in terrible shape. They had only 6 kilometers of paved road in the whole country. The Church really ran the place. They had the only schools. I don't think there was a high school. A lot of Timorese had their high schooling in the Indonesian high schools on the other side of the island. The Portuguese had not developed the economy at all. It was quite tribal to a large degree. Very much like in Irian Java or Papua New Guinea. People with spears, bow and arrows, and grass skirts, etc.

So it was a ticklish problem. For one, Indonesia was taking over an area in which there are problems already and they are going to be saddled with all of them. Not only that, but with an infrastructure that didn't exist. So it wasn't a place where you could live off the country because the country had very little livelihood. I think in the long term they actually put a lot more resources into Timor than the Portuguese did. Of course, the Indonesians also put a lot more of their people in there than the Portuguese did as well. And, of course, the Church was highly Portuguese in its orientation...the Catholic Church people there. They had all been educated in Portugal. So the Church was against the Indonesians to a large degree. So they had some bad problems there.



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But, nevertheless, we thought it was best that they open up and let others in there. We were able to persuade them to let some congressional groups go in. One congressional group, at least while I was there. My first visit there was with a congressional group. It was really highly organized. We were taken by helicopter to various places, but we weren't allowed to go off and talk to people on our own. It was very highly structured. But at the same time, if you were a very astute observer you could see what was going on. I was allowed to talk to people without Indonesians overhearing me. So I think on the whole the Congressmen produced a good report. There were different views among the Congressmen on the trip. But they were making a trip through Indonesia as a whole and only two Congressman went to Timor, I think. I think we had three days there and we traveled around from one place to another thanks to the Indonesian transportation.

Then I was able to go out again and this time much more freely. I saw a good deal more. There is a lot of talk about East Timor being not like the rest of Indonesia and it isn't to a certain degree because it has a Portuguese background. Their racial characteristics are more akin to Papua New Guinea. But the languages there are Austronesian, except for a very small minority which belongs to the non-Austronesia group of languages you find in the highland of Papua New Guinea. The lingua franca throughout the island is very close to Indonesian. I found that the children picked up Indonesian very, very rapidly, so that my second visit which was somewhat later, I found that most of the school kids spoke perfect Indonesian. Some of the adults had their education on the Indonesian side of the island. They are Melanesian to look at...they have the kinky hair and the dark skin. They also had the Melanesia sense of independence built around the clans. They are warriors. Small clans against other small clans. The Javanese on the other hand are a highly structured hierarchical society. So they are opposite types of societies to some degree. This causes some problems. The same problems that the Indonesians face in some of the other islands.



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But Timor is going to be a bigger problem from now on because the Timorese were incorporated in a way that was extralegal. They have aspirations for independence. I think these are mistaken aspirations because it is such a small and isolated area and very difficult for it to be independent on its own. It is going to need another power to take care of it in some way or another in the modern world. But I think there is always going to be a very strong element for independence there.

I think now the Indonesian administration is a better. They have a local governor now. The governor at first was a Javanese general, or at least an Indonesian general. They have gotten more and more Timorese in the act. The present governor is not from the party they supported but from the larger, non-Communist, anti-Indonesian party. So it seems that they are letting more and more people in. But it is going to be a ticklish problem for some years to come.

*Q: While you were there during this 1976-81 period were we making any representations on Timor?*

GARDNER: Yes, principally, why don't you open it up? That is much better. The stories you get are going to be bad whether you let people in or not. Why don't you let them see what you are doing there? If you are doing good things there, and we think you are doing some good things there, why don't you let people see them? Let some of the press in there. Let our congressmen in there. This was what we said privately, not publicly. We tried to keep all of this private, because the Indonesians...especially the Javanese like the President...are very strongly adverse to criticism in the press. So we were very careful with the press. But privately, this is what we were telling them, with some success.

*Q: Speaking of the press, you probably didn't have resident correspondents there, did you?*



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GARDNER: We did from time to time. Of course during the 1965 events there were resident correspondents. During the second time we were there, I think we had a Wall Street Journal person. We had some correspondents for the Far East Economics Review, who were Americans. But most of them traveled in and out.

*Q: When they came did you have any problems since the Indonesians were so sensitive to the press?*

GARDNER: We didn't tell them what demarches we were making to the government, no, of course not. We couldn't do that because then they wouldn't be demarches as we would have lost the confidentiality aspect. We tried to do this privately. I think it was reasonably successful. They did let some people in there. Once they got criticism, as was the case with Australians, they wouldn't let any Australian journalists near it. They wouldn't let Australian parliamentarians in. The Australian press was terribly combative and political, and once they took that line, the Indonesians cut the Australians off. So if you wanted to avoid that, you had to be very, very careful with the press.

*Q: In a way you were somewhat protected by the lack of propinquity to Indonesia. The Australian press, I guess, is sort of reflective of the British press instead of...well, there was scandalmongering and...*

GARDNER: There was more to it than that. There is a very emotional thing about the Timorese because the Australians had fought with the Timorese against the Japanese. So they had a little brown brother syndrome there. That is one factor. The other factor was the execution of those Australian journalists. You put those two things together...plus also the Irian Jaya thing...they had a feeling that the Indonesians might not be treating the Melanesians of Irian Jaya right.

*Q: Irian Jaya being...*



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GARDNER: The Indonesian half of the island of New Guinea. Of course the Australians had been the administrator of the other half, Papua New Guinea, which was one of their territories, and felt very paternal towards Papua New Guinea which was having trouble with Indonesia over Irian Jaya. So all of these things coincided. The Indonesians, on the other hand, seemed to think of the Australians as racist. All of these things led to very bad relations. The Australian diplomats, they were the ones who had trouble. Fortunately Australia sent its best diplomats to Indonesia and they were very, very capable people.

*Q: Looking at a map of Indonesia, one is overwhelmed by the immensity of it, particularly with all the islands. How as an Embassy were you able to cover it all?*

GARDNER: This was the nice part of an Indonesian tour that you could justify a trip to just about all of the islands. We did have consulates in Medan and Surabaya with responsibilities for their area. Medan is in north Sumatra and has responsibility for all of Sumatra and part of Borneo. Surabaya had responsibility for the eastern islands as well as central and eastern Java. Sulawesi belonged to the Embassy directly. But the Embassy people, of course, visited all of these areas. All of them are quite fascinating. There were 250 different language groups to start with. They have most of the religions you can have...Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Christianity. You had all the religions and 250 different languages plus some of the most gorgeous scenery on earth. So it made travel terribly interesting. We tried to travel as much as we could, when funds permitted it.

There are many places I haven't seen that I would love to go back and visit. Indonesia is one of those countries that you never get to see it all so there is always something to go back and see. In each one of these areas you find different problems. It is an amazing country and has combined several linguistic groups together and quite successfully, probably in good part because of their choice of language. Indonesian is a lingua franca, originally a market language. It gave no ethnic and linguistic group an advantage over the others. They had a middle ground in Indonesian. It has turned out to be a very dynamic language, borrowing words from all these other languages as well as from us, Sanskrit,



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German, etc. So this language is a big element. They escaped the linguistic problems of India. No one, so to speak, is Indonesian-speaking by ethnic group. So you don't have that problem. That is one of the reasons that they have been able to develop...because of this amazingly, dynamic and plastic language that they have.

*Q: From your vantage point, we were making all sorts of overtures to China and shoring up relations during this period and yet the Indonesians did not have a benevolent view towards the Peoples Republic of China...*

GARDNER: No, and they worried about this. They worried about what China would gain from this, especially the military. They always had the feeling that Peking had something to do with the coup in Indonesia and was supporting the Communist Party. Many leaders of the Communist Party were in Peking at the time and the Peking leaders showed a certain knowledge of what went on when it happened.

This got around Indonesia. The Chinese denied this, of course. But they don't deny the fact that the PKI was very Chinese oriented. And it was helped by a great number of Chinese within Indonesia, who had about 80 percent of the non-agricultural capital in the country in their hands, although they comprised less than 3 percent of the population. So they had a genuine fear of China which persists to some degree today. But amazingly it has now turned around because within the last 18 months they have established relations with China. Just when everybody else was having trouble with China over Tiananmen Square, their long period of trying to work out a relationship finally came to fruition and they established relations again.

But at that time they were very worried. We did receive some cautions from them. They did not want us saying that now was the time for them to open up. They didn't want us telling them what they should do about China. So we were very careful about that.



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*Q: It was great for you to be careful in Jakarta, but were there any problems about noises that would come out of Washington from various sources?*

GARDNER: No. I don't think any of them really came out and said that Indonesia should do this too. But obviously there were a lot of things in the works that now was the time to change the relationship with China. Indonesia wasn't ready to listen, they let us know that. And they cautioned us on how much we let the Chinese have because they didn't want China to become a tremendous economic power or great military power. They didn't want to see China get a fleet, for example. Indonesia was invaded by Kubla Khan in the old days. They didn't want to see one of those fleets come down again.

*Q: What was the feeling towards Vietnam? During this period, and it continues today, we didn't recognize Vietnam. Vietnam was certainly playing a major role in that area of the world. Did they consider it a problem, or did they feel that it was so involved in its own affairs that it really wasn't going to matter?*

GARDNER: Vietnam was a very special case with them. Now Sukarno, as you know, was an ally of Vietnam...and Peking as well. The Indonesians were very strong nationalists and they had won their revolution through the shedding of blood and they felt that the Vietnamese did the same. The people who were really responsible for that were more in Hanoi than in the south. They seemed to feel that Hanoi had the nationalist backing and that the south was too much a puppet of the big world powers. On the other hand, they were in 1965 strongly anti-Communist.

So they were torn in two different directions there. They sort of retained relations with both sides. They always kept their embassy in Hanoi. There was always sort of a special relationship with Hanoi, especially when it had trouble with China. Vietnam was looked on by the Indonesians as a buffer to China. Remember the Vietnamese don't have any population in Indonesia. They don't have any businessmen in Indonesia. Chinese businessmen do exist in Indonesia. Very few of those are Communists, by the way, but



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they are still Chinese. So Vietnam was a completely different kettle of fish. They never looked upon it as a strong threat, I think. On the other hand, I think they would have just as soon not have had them win in the south. They have tried to accommodate themselves with Vietnam to some degree, especially because of the Chinese feeling.

They were very anti-Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia.

*Q: What about boat people? Were they a problem?*

GARDNER: This was a big problem while I was there, but the Indonesians did cooperate quite a bit. We probably had less trouble than our Embassy in Malaysia did. There were a lot of boat people landing in Indonesia. Indonesia is a very poor country and can't handle this type of people. But they did set up a refugee camp and part of our role was, really, to support that refugee camp on the island of Galang.

Part of my role as DCM was getting out to the refugee camps. We had some high level visitors that I accompanied to the camps. The visitors included the singer, Joan Baez, who is a fabulous singer. I accompanied her on a helicopter trip way out in the South China Sea to a small island, where the refugees had first landed, to visit the camps up there. She is a fantastic person.

*Q: I might just add for the record that Joan Baez is part of a group of the '60s who were strongly against American action in Vietnam. But after Vietnam fell, unlike so many of the other people who were opposed to our Vietnam policy, she was concerned about the aftermath.*

GARDNER: Not only concerned, but really worked hard at it. She sang to these people without accompaniment. What a voice. I had always thought when I heard her on the radio that she was amplified, but she has a voice as loud as an operatic voice. She really worked hard and sang to these camps way out in the wilderness. We had to stay on a



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barge and on a helicopter for three hours without an island in sight, over the ocean. She was great.

*Q: Were we able to take care of...?*

GARDNER: Yes. There were a few pushoffs in the Indonesian islands, but less than elsewhere. On the whole they got very good care. One of our problems was...you know it is highly populated in those areas and everybody is scraping out a living. If the refugees lived too much higher than the local population, you had a bit of a problem. In some cases they almost did. But on the whole it worked out well and the Indonesians were quite cooperative.

We had our problems, yes. The local military commander somewhere else might make a ruling and suddenly we had to cope...but on the whole at the higher levels we had good cooperation. We had our moments of tension, but on the whole both the Indonesians and the Americans can look back at a job well done.

*Q: You left there in 1981 and came back to what?*

GARDNER: I was director of regional affairs for the East Asian Bureau. I principally worked on policy matters of a country as a whole. On human rights and that sort of stuff.

*Q: This was from 1981 to 1985?*

GARDNER: It was from 1981 to 1984.

*Q: Let's stop now and pick this up later.*

*Q: Today is June 16, 1992. This is a continuing interview with Ambassador Paul Gardner. Paul, in our last interview we got you out of Ankara in 1976 and then you went to Indonesia as political counselor and later DCM where you served from 1976-81. Who was the Ambassador then?*



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GARDNER: When I arrived it was David Newsom. He was replaced by Ed Masters. I became DCM under Ed who I had worked with before in Indonesia.

*Q: What was the political situation during this period?*

GARDNER: Well they were moving very slowly towards democracy in an Indonesian manner. It was a very managed democracy. It has always been an authoritarian society, except for four years when they had a parliamentary regime based on the Dutch regime. But it was a mess. It just didn't work at all because the parties were organized as in Holland along religious and ethnic divisions. Therefore they accentuated the most volatile and difficult cleavages in society. It ended up in revolt and authoritarianism under Sukarno. Their experience with democracy was very bad, especially for the military. It represented disorder and personal politicians using ethnic cleavages to advance their own ethnic and religious cleavages to advance their own political fortunes. This is how the military looked at it.

Therefore they were aiming for democracy, they had elections, but they were very, very controlled. But this would have been the case anyway because the Indonesian people culturally are very disciplined and hierarchical. Villages always listened to their village chief, village chiefs listened to the district chief, etc. One Indonesian sociologist that I know quite well said once that there was great difficulty in creating a middle class, an entrepreneurial class in Indonesia because the Indonesians are conditioned to do nothing without an order. In other words they don't really feel they have authority to do anything unless they have authority to do something from above. This is part of their culture. It gives you a very disciplined culture, it gives you a very orderly culture. But it is not very dynamic and their experiment with democracy obviously were hard for some Americans to understand.

I think our failure...this was the time that the Carter administration had come in along with Pat Derian and others on human rights, etc....was that we tended to judge it very



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superficially, not taking into account where they were coming from, what their culture was. Too often we try to put another country into the American mold and they are not a democracy unless they do things the way we do.

I think the Indonesians were going about it in the right way. They had to go gradually. It was from the top down, and that was how the Indonesians operated. Of course, when you have an authoritarian regime like this, you have some of the people in authority abusing it. This did occur in Indonesia. Not to the degree that some people would think, however.

They had an election every five years and had a five year plan. The Suharto regime based its very existence on its ability to produce economic development, unlike the Sukarno regime which was based around the theory of nation building—nationalism—and therefore fighting external enemies, particularly imperialism, colonialism and the United States. This regime was based on producing something for the people, economic development. The elections were timed to coincide with the five year plan. So you had to produce something economically because, although you were virtually guaranteed the election, how much force you had to use and how much you had to rein in the opposition could be a sign of disorder in the realm. It was a sign that your government wasn't working. So they wanted to win the elections with the least coercion possible. The elections I have seen since that time all have been a little freer than the last ones.

Now we are getting into the last part of the regime and I don't want to comment on it because I think in many ways Suharto has been there too long and has not allowed political participation to go quite as fast as even the military would like. But, nevertheless, I don't think he can be faulted on the whole on how he led the country considering where they started and where they are now.

You have to have been there to see them under Sukarno to know how far better they are now, not only from the point of view of economic development, but also from the point of view of public expression...albeit, in formulas and not directly, but indirectly. But



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criticism when expressed indirectly is far more fun and far more attention getting than this confrontational thing we have here. In Indonesia they like subtleties. You can criticize the regime as long as you do it lightly and indirectly. Don't call people by their real names and don't call them bad names. But, nevertheless, talk about certain situations as they develop and let the reader put two and two together. And the reader in putting two and two together gets a tremendous amount of pleasure out of the criticism.

*Q: As political counselor, with a one party system, what do you do?*

GARDNER: Oh, there was a great deal of politics going on although there was one party running things. How this party was developing...there were two other parties by the way which were not considered opposition, one for the Moslems and one for the nationalists and Christians together. They were quite active and were really opposition in Indonesian fashion. But the Indonesians have a cultural thing against open expression of conflict. It exists in the individual relationship as well as in the larger relationship. The concept of opposition is wrong for them. Everybody has to be on the same side. There can't be any winners and losers, so to speak. Everybody has to be a winner.

But within that framework there are a lot of things going on. A lot of politics going on. A lot of politics as to how this new party would develop. What its emphasis was going to be? Who it was going to bring up? Happily it brought up a lot of young civilians and trained them. Some of the people that the military had put in jail were recognized as born leaders and once they were out of jail they co-opted them into the government party.

You could see some things going on in Golkar, as it was called at that time. They had a vision of the PRI in Mexico, of a civilian party taking over from the military. This would be the transition. This organization would do it. It was the civilian shadow of the military. There have been some disappointments with it, but in many respects it has made a contribution to the growth of the country.



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There were some Moslems in particular, who I knew from the old days. As a political officer I followed the Moslem groups. They were more or less in opposition to Suharto and I continued to follow them to see what they were up to. They were divided into many different groups. So that was interesting.

There were the old Sukarnoists that were left over and just waiting for the government to stumble. There was a certain romance to the Sukarno days. He, after all, was a George Washington to the Indonesians.

Well, let's talk in general terms about the Carter regime, a Democratic regime, therefore being an activist regime. Many of the young people brought in wanted to remake foreign policy and the world. Indonesia was one of the places that they centered on. I, quite frankly, found this at the time a bit presumptuous, especially this activist thing...the Indonesians should be doing this and that. They had made tremendous strides with not so much input from the United States. We hadn't been giving them a large amount of aid, yet they had made tremendous progress. So part of it was educating our own government to what they had done. They actually had a development program that was reaching out into the grass roots.

*Q: What was your impression, for example, of the Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs, Richard Holbrooke, who was a Foreign Service Officer who had quit over the Vietnam war and then came back? He was very bright but quite young.*

GARDNER: He was extremely bright, extremely articulate and extremely aggressive in this way that I have been talking about. He wanted to make his mark and this administration had to make its mark on policy.

Let me say the good things about him first. In drawing attention to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the importance of this organization he did a tremendous service. He was very articulate when in the government himself. He got us



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fully behind ASEAN and recognized the importance of ASEAN and had the government recognize the importance of ASEAN.

I think that was a big contribution. He was an intelligent person. He saw a lot of things that were going on. He was dealing with other people within the administration who were very, very difficult and had their own agenda...such as civil rights. He kept them fairly well in line.

He had his own problems in Washington because, as I remember the State Department at that time was chaos. Carter had appointed most of the Deputy Assistant Secretaries, who were mostly congressional aides with their own ideas of what should be done. So getting a coordinated policy out of the State Department was very difficult because we had people going off in all directions on their own, just as they did when they were congressional aides and had to answer only to their congressman. They all had their little differences in Congress and had their little differences in the State Department too.

I think that Holbrooke managed that quite well in Washington, compared to others. I think he did a better job than Vance, for example. I think Vance, quite frankly, didn't run the State Department very well. He is a brilliant fellow as well. But I don't think anybody was running the State Department terribly well.

That being said, I should say that being aggressive and wanting to make his own mark, and tell the people what to do, Holbrooke upset a lot of people on the other side. He was not a diplomat. I have seen him on various trips and he, quite frankly, upset people. A lot of his personal relationships were not good with many of the countries. I think they were all right with the Philippines, and with Australia. I know personally because some of the remarks that were made to me.

*Q: When you say relationships, was this with our Embassies or with the governments?*

GARDNER: With the host governments. He was not a diplomat and didn't act like a diplomat in social functions. I don't know how to say it. I hate to be unkind, he is not



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my enemy. But he upset people. He knew Asia well in many respects. Understood the dynamics there. But he did not know how to deal with Asians very well. I know in particular he upset the Japanese, the Indonesians and the Thai.

*Q: I was in South Korea when he arrived on his first trip there and there was a South Korean delegation to meet him at the plane. He walked off the plane and in the first place he was very young looking and was carrying a tennis racket. They were very concerned about the Carter policy of withdrawing our troops from there and here is the man with the word carrying a tennis racket. This isn't the way you deal with Asians.*

GARDNER: No. Unfortunately there were other things. He had a new girl friend with him and spent most of his time smooching with her at official functions and on trips. He put his feet on coffee tables and you don't do that in Asia because it is a sign of tremendous disrespect to point the sole of your foot at anybody. You would think that he would have known that having served himself in Asia.

*Q: It was one of the first things that I was told when I went to Vietnam.*

GARDNER: Another thing is that he had answers for everybody on what he thought they should be doing, whether it was refugees in Thailand—he wanted to tell them exactly how they should handle their refugee policy. So there was a tendency of our government to lecture to other governments, and they didn't enjoy this. Some people were very outspoken about Holbrooke to me from Thailand, Japan and Indonesia. I know he wasn't liked by the foreign ministries in those countries.

*Q: Let's take Indonesia and your experience. This is not an unknown phenomena. A new administration comes in and a hotshot comes out and ruffles a lot of feathers. You are technically the spokespeople, the representatives of the administration, also the United States...sometimes this gets to be are you a representative of the United States or a*



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*Carter representative, or whatever administration. How did you work essentially damage control at the Embassy after he came through?*

GARDNER: You did it piecemeal. First you tried to educate the people back in Washington. Holbrooke was bright and he did read your cables. There was nothing you could do about his personality which clashed with Asians. But you could help to ameliorate things.

*Q: Was there a Timores anti-Indonesian lobby in the United States?*

GARDNER: It was the same group. There is a group, if you like, of civil rights minded, also leftist group, congressional aides, certain congressmen, and some academics who have periodic seminars and meeting on Indonesia, starting with PKI, the Indonesian Communist massacres in 1965 which ousted the Communists at that time. There is a group that continually wants to have hearings and believes that you are dealing with sort of a Fascist regime in Indonesia. This group I strongly disagree with. This group feels that the PKI was a great victim of the coup of 1965 and not a perpetrator. That is really rewriting history. No one who was there at the time, including the Chinese and the Russians, would have ever said that. Everybody knew that the PKI was up to their ears in this mess. They brought this catastrophe on themselves. But there is this group that feels that we have an oppressive military regime that killed the Communists and is now oppressing the Timores. That is not exactly the problem. But you do have an authoritarian regime and do have some instances of misuse of military force.

Most recently, and I am very pleased to say it was recognized by the Indonesian government, itself, and the people who were involved in it in Timor have been punished. This is the first time that the Indonesians have punished the military or at least done it openly and publicly. They have in the past, but it has always been privately. In this last instance, the generals were reassigned, their careers were brought to an end. The ones actually involved in the shooting of the demonstrators were court martialed. So I think this



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is a good sign of some change and some more controls over the military. There have been some rather striking evolution in a way on how the military operates in Indonesia over time I think.

*Q: How did you find the staff of the Embassy the second time you were there?*

GARDNER: On the whole we had a well functioning Embassy. We had some good people. I think we worked as a unit. Of course, during my first tour when we worked under the conditions that we did, you are very much a team because your life was at stake to a certain degree. But you also felt very close together. We didn't have that closeness because we became a much larger Embassy in many respects and we were dealing with a much more diverse society. So we all had our own things that we were doing. We weren't living with each other as closely as before. But nevertheless, I was blessed with two outstanding Ambassadors in Masters and Newsom. I think they ran things right.

You always had little bureaucratic problems...some with AID or the military, etc. But on the whole I don't think we had many. Things moved along pretty well. Our problems came from Washington on how they handled certain things such as human rights and the Timor problem. It was difficult for the United States to take a back seat role. We always have had a front seat role in Southeast Asia. But when you looked at the fact that we were an aid giver on the level of Holland, we weren't giving this country anything so to speak any more. We might have been a world power, but none of that power was helping Indonesia very much. Our assistance program was tiny compared to what the Japanese were doing. So you can't push people around. Holbrooke and others were used to operating in the milieu of Vietnam. I also served in Laos and Cambodia when we ran everything. But in Indonesia we never ran anything, ever.

Marshall Green, when I was there, had great trouble with getting Washington to keep its hands off of it. I think the only reason Washington kept its hands off of Indonesia was that its hands were full with Vietnam. And because we did keep our hands off, things went



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quite well. Give them some pats on the back, give them some suggestions if you like, but lets not try to put them into some kind of mold and give them a report card and say that we expect them to shape up here and there. Especially when we weren't giving them anything else.

That was our primary problem. As usual, the Embassy's problems were in Washington and not in Jakarta.

*Q: Well, then you left there in 1981. Was there much of a change in our attitude when the Reagan administration came in?*

GARDNER: I don't think so. In both cases we were dealing with unknowns. I think there was a great deal of concern with Carter and much less with Reagan. I think the military was more comfortable with the Reagan administration than the Carter administration. But it really didn't impact at that time in Indonesia very much. There weren't any great changes as there was when Carter took over, when we tried to become much more involved in grass root stuff. The Carter administration wanted to make its image worldwide. I think that Reagan's real politic, if you like, with his emphasis on defense was more in line with what the Indonesians felt. They were always a little worried about China, but on the whole this has come out okay. Suharto has visited Peking. But in those days they were a little worried...this started back with Nixon...because of their imagined role of the Chinese Communist Party in the PKI uprising, they felt that we were getting a little too close to China.

*Q: Well then you came back to Washington where you served from 1981-84 as director of Turkish affairs?*

GARDNER: No, director of regional affairs in the East Asian Bureau. Human rights there too. I worked on some ASEAN matters and congressional relations and military programs, etc. for all of East Asia as a whole.



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*Q: On human rights did you feel, having been sort of at the spear point of human rights at one point, that with the Reagan administration there was a different approach to it?*

GARDNER: Quite frankly you know, we had a meeting, and I can remember you talking about a difference...we had a meeting in the Embassy, because one of the first things that came out was what do you think about human rights reports. Should we still have human rights reports. This was when Reagan had just taken over. So we had a meeting on it. Quite frankly, I was a proponent for abolishing it because I thought it was very presumptuous of us to give report cards to other countries. Our own record wasn't all that clear and I didn't think one country...maybe an international organization, okay...Amnesty International or anybody else...but I didn't think one country should judge another country's human rights. I had strong reservations about that.

I was chairing the meeting and our political counselor, Harriet Isom, made a very strong pitch for keeping them. She was a woman and I listened to her carefully. She had many good points. No matter what you say about them, people have gotten used to them now so you have already paid the cost for them, as she put out, and they did some good. They actually caused some policy changes. People didn't like to see themselves in these reports. She thought they should be kept. And, perhaps she is right. I still have qualms about them, but on balance she may very well be right.

*Q: Stating a personal prejudice, I went through all the convolutions of wondering about this, but in the long run I come out with Harriet. If not us, nobody else is really going to do it to carry any real weight. It is presumptuous as all hell and we are not very good, but again in so many things we represent the only power in the world who can do some of these things. But I feel very uncomfortable about it though.*

GARDNER: Yes, I think Harriet's point that we already paid our price and people have gotten used to them may be correct. But, I still have reservations about the whole idea.



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*Q: It is troublesome. What was the attitude towards human rights when you were in the East Asian Bureau?*

GARDNER: We were following through on the reports. This was the Reagan administration and they weren't putting that kind of stuff around it, but we followed through. They had become much less emotional and more scientific. We were just collecting data and putting it forward, so to speak. There was no move by the Reagan administration to tell us not to criticize certain countries or make any changes in the rules as far as I could see. I think perhaps we were a little less intent to take a crusading role and a little more sociological about it all. We had no real problems with the desks or anyone else. We are such a bureaucratic regime that it had become part of the routine. It was like taking temperatures or blood pressures. It was sort of a routine exercise recognizing that we were going to have trouble with some of the countries each time it came out, and that we had to handle. But that gave us something to do. That is our job to handle this kind of stuff.

I guess congressional hearings were our biggest problem and that is where I spent most of my time on the Hill, primarily on military assistance programs. This is always a very trying period. I did a lot of speech writing.

*Q: What were the issues at the hearings on military assistance?*

GARDNER: All sorts of things came up. Timor came up automatically when it was Indonesia. China obviously ...there were two accounts, you know, the Taiwanese supporters who were very strong in the Reagan Administration and the ones who wanted to keep our relations with China on an even keel. I think the China relationship was one of the most important issues at the time. I feel that Haig was handling it wrong. He was kowtowing to the Chinese to a large degree because of his geopolitical leanings which were rather simplistic to say the least. I think Shultz and Paul Wolfowitz, who did an excellent job as Assistant Secretary, I think, saw this and made some changes in our Chinese policy I was glad to see them. I wasn't involved in Chinese policy, except



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on the periphery. I attended a few meetings on it, but that was about it. I think that the adjustments there were very wise and well done. When we stopped kowtowing, the Chinese began to compromise.

I think there were some problems with ASEAN as there always was. One of my duties was to prepare for the meeting with the ASEAN foreign ministers each year. I went out there for that and prepared the Secretary's speech and prepared the paperwork. We did have a few problems with ASEAN countries, but all of a friendly nature that could be handled quite well. Part of it was simply getting the administration to give some time to some areas of that part of the world when they were very much involved elsewhere in Central America and in the Middle East.

*Q: What was the feeling towards Vietnam? Was there any interest in Vietnam?*

GARDNER: It was primarily the missing in action thing. And Cambodia. Once the Vietnamese had invaded Cambodia that really drove our policy. It was those two things. As long as we had no movement on either one of them there wasn't going to be any change in the policy towards Vietnam. So that was very static during the period I was there. The movement has now occurred, of course, and we see this rapprochement. But we saw none of that during the time we were there. Vietnam remained a very tough and repressive regime and one we could unload all of our Reagan rhetoric on. I, like everybody else, thought of Vietnam as someone we could throw rocks at with the feeling of justification.

*Q: Also someone who is not going to throw rocks back, at this point.*

GARDNER: Well, they tried but couldn't reach us.

So it was a time when rhetoric was used very strongly against Vietnam and no real effort to do anything because we felt they would have to take some moves first. We were right, and they did.



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*Q: Then we come to the time that you were appointed as Ambassador to Papua New Guinea where you served from 1984-86. How did this appointment come about?*

GARDNER: I don't know. I think, quite frankly, that Paul Wolfowitz was looking for something for me to do. I had served him for three years and I guess he felt that he should do something for me. He looked around and Papua New Guinea was coming vacant. This is the way things happened really. You become an ambassador because somebody owes you something. You like to feel they chose you because of your great attributes in dealing with lesser developed countries and your knowledge of the area, but that isn't it. It is because you have been dealing with somebody and helping them and they feel that they should do something for you and the best thing you can do for a Foreign Service officer is to get him an ambassadorial assignment. So he managed to get me to Papua New Guinea and I was delighted.

*Q: When you went out what were American interests there?*

GARDNER: We were saying that we didn't have much interest there and we should leave it all to Australia, which made Papua New Guinea furious. I found that I was going to a country that was very unhappy with the United States. You thought you were going to a friendly country where there are really no problems. The other problem is, of course, that in the Law of the Sea...one of the Reagan things was not to sign the Law of the Sea and the Law of the Sea meant a great deal to these people. One of their resources was tuna and our tuna fishermen had just recently moved out there with their huge vessels and were taking all the tuna in that area.

I was also Ambassador to the Solomon Islands, with responsibilities for Vanuatu. The Solomon Islands had caught one of our tuna fish boats in their waters and because of our legislation we had to cut off all assistance to them...not that we were giving them much, but we made an issue of it because of our legislation against interfering with what we considered to be lawful fishing.



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This infuriated the Solomon Islands and they didn't accept my credentials until quite late. I had been there for some time before they accepted me. I am certain that I am the only person who has gone to present his credentials and received a lecture from the head of state, in this case the Governor General, on how awful the United States was. We were called the bully of the Pacific. It was really very embarrassing. But it gave me something to wire back to Washington...that the Governor General had called my country a bully when he accepted my credentials.

Most of my efforts were in trying to get Washington focused on our relationship. The Pacific islanders were flirting with the Russians. This I used to the hilt, I must say, to try to get a change in our policy because the Russians were offering fishery agreements. Vanuatu entered into one and the others were thinking of it too, although they couldn't stand the Communists. They refused to ever accept a Communist embassy in Papua New Guinea. But suddenly they became interested when they got so furious with us.

*Q: What was the issue at that time with the Law of the Sea?*

GARDNER: They, of course, are archipelagos and we were fishing in archipelagic waters. Under the Law of the Sea you have to have an agreement to do so. Actually the Solomon Islands claimed, and they may be right, that we were fishing in their territorial waters, within 17 miles of the coast. Certainly we were fishing in the archipelagic waters. So we had some basic problems on that. We said that we could fish without an agreement throughout the archipelago.

What saved us, quite frankly, and helped put our relationship on an even keel, was the Russians. The Russians were coming and we made the most of it. Vanuatu had invited them in and the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea were talking about it. It was all because they were furious that we wouldn't sign a fishery agreement.



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The tuna lobby at that time was a very powerful lobby on the Hill. They had not only all of the California delegation, but we are a big tuna eating country so they had all the area which had tuna industries. All of these constituencies very strongly wanted us to fish anywhere we wanted to fish. We had just recently moved into their waters because other waters had been fished out. We had gotten these huge vessels that could go that far. They took an enormous amount of fish. This was an important resource of the islands. On our side, everyone listened to the tuna lobby and nobody else. Who had ever heard of Papua New Guinea or Solomon Islands, until they started flirting with the Russians.

This would have been less of a lever in the days of Carter, but in the days of Reagan this was a nice geopolitical lever. The government stood up to a some degree to the tuna industry. In fact, I think that was really the tuna lobby's downfall. Their stance on this issue was so strong and so weakly justified that I think they antagonized a lot of people and they have never been as powerful since. But my problem was getting along with the tuna industry because they had a man on our negotiating delegation. The head of the delegation appointed by Reagan had originally worked for one of the tuna companies in the United States. We really had them represented there. Nevertheless, they recognized where we were going and Reagan, I think, was very embarrassed about what was happening over this sort of thing. They were a bit disturbed by the tuna lobby carrying this so far. The tuna lobby was used to imposing its will on these other countries, so to speak. But the Pacific islanders don't like imposition of somebody else's will. They know how to do some fighting.

We did get an agreement, finally, before I left. We negotiated a fishery agreement and this really helped a great deal with our relationship. But up until that time, I want to tell you I was not a very popular person in either Papua New Guinea or the Solomon Islands. We hadn't had any of their leaders over to the White House. We had just expected Australia to handle our relationship there. Well, you can't do that. Another country can't handle your relationships, you have to handle them yourself. I think the Pacific islanders taught us



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this by flirting with the Russians. I guess we were just lucky that the Communist regime hadn't collapsed at that stage so that they could use it as a lever to get something that they should have had all along, which was a very reasonable agreement. This has allowed the relationship to progress quite evenly since that time.

*Q: What about the Japanese? They have always been a fishing power.*

GARDNER: They had an agreement. Everyone else had agreements, except us.

*Q: So we were odd man out.*

GARDNER: Yes. And the Australians gave us a great deal of trouble. The Australian Ambassador here gave a speech here that didn't go over very well with Shultz, I think. He lambasted our policy in the Pacific Islands when he gave a speech to the Asian Society. Australia was defending their fuzzy-wuzzy brothers against these awful Americans.

This was the corner we found ourselves in. Everyone was hammering on us. We finally saw the light.

One of the basic problems is that as a big nation we aren't geared to deal with small nations like this. We are going to have to learn. Our AID program, for example. They didn't want to have an AID program in Papua New Guinea because there was no way they could have a program unless they had an environment officer, an agricultural officer, a health officer, etc. So you could only set up an AID program if you had an AID mission, 20-30 officers at a minimum. This is the way they approached things. I tried to get some AID people to just come out for a visit. The AID Assistant Administrator was angry. He thought I was circumventing their "no AID program." He actually ordered our would-be AID visitors off the plane when they were about to take off for a visit to Papua New Guinea. This is the sort of problem we had. We were not geared up to deal with small nations in handling state visits, or AID programs.



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Partly because of what happened in the Pacific islands, we came to realize we had some serious problems. Ship visits, for example. New Zealand, of course, had this thing about nuclear weapons. New Zealand would not receive our vessels unless we told them whether we had nuclear weapons on board. Our policy is to neither confirm nor deny. There are military reasons for this and I certainly agree with them and disagree with the New Zealand position. But, nevertheless, New Zealand were allies and they lost a great deal by this policy. But Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands were not allies and were even more concerned about nuclear matters because they had been educated by Australian and New Zealand leftists, who have had a great influence on the education of the Pacific islanders. A lot of the expatriate staff members in the universities out there in Fiji and Papua New Guinea are leftists. The Pacific islanders were also worried about nuclear weapons because of what happened in Bikini next door to them. They felt that the Pacific is used as a testing ground. The French were testing out there. This was a big issue. This was the second issue...nuclear weapons after tuna.

The islanders were talking about denying our ships access to the islands. Well there are not many islands in the Pacific and if you start denying access to Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu islands, all of Melanesia, you are denying access to a large part of the Pacific. So this was a concern of our military. They were not going to change their "neither confirm nor deny" policy but they did feel that the tuna policy should be changed. So we had a little support from the military on the tuna policy.

In the long run, this worked out to some degree as well, because we did solve the tuna problem. Then we found that our military relationship was easier to work with. The Solomon Islanders who were the strongest opponents of the US military presence had a very bad cyclone and we were able to get the SeaBees out to do some reconstruction. So for the first time they received the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific out of Hawaii. They didn't want a ship visit, but they received a plane visit with the Commander. It was a great



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success. Considering this was where Guadalcanal was, it was a very important symbolic gesture.

I am not saying that I had anything to do it, but the course of events were such that by the time I left the relationship with all three of the countries was much better than it was before, simply because our problems came to a head while I was there and Washington was smart enough to change its policy, at least as far as tuna was concerned. Eventually we got an AID mission—one man. So we have made some moves. We started learning how to deal with small countries. We have a presence there and are not just saying, “Well, this country is small and we'll leave it to somebody else.” Do that and you are going to be in trouble.

*Q: How did you deal with the various governments, you personally?*

GARDNER: Well, you know Melanesians have a payback thing. When they are angry with you they show it by not receiving you. They were angry with me quite a bit so the Foreign Minister used to make strong public statements against the United States and refused to see me. This was a bit embarrassing, to say the least. Happily the Prime Minister, Sir Michael Somare, whom I have admiration and affection for, did receive me. So I was able to tell him a few things. They are not ones for standing on diplomacy. They show their anger in strong ways...usually through a press statement.

It is a small society. Papua New Guinea only has three million people and the capital city only 75,000, so you got to know the people and politicians there fairly well. The Solomon Islands has a population of around 250,000 and the capital city only 20,000, so you got to know everybody there pretty well. They are nice people, I enjoyed them. They are sometimes quite difficult and have a justified chip on their shoulders about the United States. We bullied them. They don't like to be bullied. They show it in their own way. But, it was fun. I enjoyed it very much.



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I found their culture to be completely the opposite of the Indonesian culture next door. The Indonesians avoid conflict and confrontation. That is the last thing they want. The Melanesians love a good fight. If there isn't a conflict they will create one quite often. That was fascinating. I enjoyed that.

*Q: Were there any problems with the Indonesians when you were there?*

GARDNER: There have been basic problems there for a long time. They share a border. There is a Free Papua movement on the Indonesian side and they sought sanctuary on the Papua New Guinea side. The Indonesians and Papua New Guineans handled it very well. At one time there were 10,000 refugees on the Papua New Guinea side of the border that had come over because of the fighting between the OPM, the Free Papua Movement and the Indonesian military on the Indonesian side. The OPM forced refugees across the border in order to gain publicity. I think the Papua New Guineans began to realize that the OPM was taking advantage of them by spreading rumors that the Indonesian military were coming and the people had better cross the border. They could get publicity from the Australian press in this manner. Papua New Guineans don't like to be used and they didn't want OPM using them, even though they were Melanesians brothers. When the threatened to blow up Papua New Guinea's largest gold mine at Oktedi at one stage, it was the last straw. There were some OPM sympathizers in Papua New Guinea, and there was fear of Indonesia, a very strong fear of this huge country that had actually taken over Irian Jaya by force. But both countries were working things out.

The Indonesians took great efforts in this regard. They invited Papua New Guinean government representatives to see what things were like on the other side of the border. They made some good moves, a good effort. The Papua New Guineans on the other hand were anxious to have a direct relationship with Indonesia and not go through Australia. They wanted to cut their apron string to the Australians. The Australians had their own



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problems with the Indonesians. So Papua New Guinea and Indonesia started working things out.

*Q: Did they use you at all as an expert on the side?*

GARDNER: No, and I am glad they didn't. I certainly didn't volunteer. I told some of the people one time that I thought they were doing the right thing, but I didn't volunteer any advice to any side. I knew both sides, but I wasn't going to get into it. They didn't want me in. They didn't want anyone in the middle. I just absorbed it and was so pleased at the way they handled it. They were sitting on a powder keg, quite frankly. And they knew it. They handled it quite well, I thought, and I was quite pleased.

*Q: You then came back. What did you do?*

GARDNER: My health wasn't too good. So I came back to write a book at the National Defense University. I was thinking about retiring. So I wrote the book and then retired.

*Q: What was the book?*

GARDNER: I was comparing Papua New Guinea's and Indonesia's adaptation to a market economy. It was the cultural side that interested me because they approached it from completely different angles. They were culturally opposite when it comes to competition. Their attitude to competition and towards cooperation is just about as far apart as you can get. So I wanted to compare it. And yet they started off with economic endowments that were very similar. They both have a good deal of mineral wealth, their tropical sun, etc. The big variant was culture and I wanted to show how they approach these problems from completely different angles and what their successes and disappointments were. But mostly I was patting them on the back.

*Q: Well that was fine. Thank you very much.*



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GARDNER: You are welcome.

End of interview